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# SERMONS

FOR ALL THE

Sundays of the Ecclesiastical Year

AND

THE PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS.

FOR THE USE OF PARISH PRIESTS  
AND FOR PRIVATE READING.

BY  
VERY REV. GEORGE DESHON, C. S. P.

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## PREFACE.

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**I**N preparing these Sermons, as far as I am able to judge, I have endeavored to forget myself, and aimed only at the good of my hearers.

I have tried to use simple and straightforward language, so as to be clearly and easily understood:—

To give a higher idea of the power, wisdom and goodness of God our Creator, and of our nothingness as creatures;

Of the immensity and glorious character of the eternal destiny prepared for us, and the dreadful consequences of our failure to attain it;

To magnify the Goodness of God in redeeming us, and his readiness to give us abundant graces to help us to attain it;

To explain that the essence of religion



does not consist in sentiment and feeling, but in a sincere obedience ;

That the road of obedience is not too difficult, but, as our Saviour says, "easy and light" to all who are well disposed ;

To inspire a generous enthusiasm to keep the Commandments, not only in the letter but also in the spirit ;

That each one in his own state of life should ardently desire to conform himself in all things to the will of God as far as he can ascertain it.

I hope the Sermons may prove to be serviceable to some of my brethren of the clergy, and to the laity who may read them at home in their families.

THE AUTHOR.

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# The Sundays of Advent.

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## REFORMATION OF LIFE.

(*First Sunday of Advent.*)

The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.—*Rom. xiii. 12.*

THE eye of the body is a wonderful contrivance by means of which we perceive everything around us, so that we can make out the way in which we desire to go and pass therein without danger; and if there is anything in the way we avoid it, and also see the marks or indications which tell us that we are on the right road to reach our destination. But the eye is of no use when there is no light. In pitch darkness we might as well have no eyes. So it is in the night when there is no moon: we can hardly get along if we have no lantern. But when night passes away, the day begins to dawn; then a light diffuses itself, and although things look dim and shadowy, there is plenty of light to guide us; then day comes on and everything stands out clear and plain.

Now, our right reason is the eye of the soul. By the use of reason we are guided along the road of life and enabled to reach

our final destination. We avoid what is hurtful to us, and accept what is useful. But this eye of the soul needs light as well as the eye of the body. This light is knowledge. In order to go safely on the road of life we must know certain things.

What we need to know is, chiefly : Whence we came, or who made us ; and where we are going, or what we were made for ; and how we must live in order to reach our final destination.

For many centuries most of the people of this world had not the knowledge of these most important things. They walked in darkness, and groped their way along as best they could. They had some light, but not much ; and they were subject to much sorrow and affliction for the want of this light or knowledge. Then our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ came into the world. He was God in Heaven from all eternity, and he, without ceasing to be God, became Man also, and came down to teach us all that it is necessary for us to know. This is the reason St. Paul says in the text, "The night is passed, and the day is at hand."

Christians, whether you be in the state of grace or not, you know that the night is passed and the day is at hand. You cannot plead ignorance any longer. You know who

made you. God, the infinitely powerful, the infinitely wise, and the infinitely good, made you and everything else. You know what you were made for. You were made to see God face to face, and to share with him an infinite happiness for all eternity. You know how you ought to live. To keep God's commandments; to avoid the sins and vices of this life. To love God by sincere obedience with all your hearts and minds and souls and strength. You know that if you do not thus sincerely seek to serve God, you will never reach your eternal destiny, but be cast out for ever from God's presence into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This light and knowledge which God has given us is the best thing he could give us. It is something for which we can never thank him enough. For with it we can obtain everything we desire and all possible good, and without it there is nothing but want and misery. It is better than riches, for riches cannot secure happiness. They cannot purchase freedom from sickness and death. Death robs us of all earthly things; riches, honors, pleasures, all vanish away and are gone with death. And death has no time set; it comes when least expected, and quickly enough at the farthest. If we place our final end and



chief happiness in anything but God, we may get what we aim at; and when we have it, what does it amount to? Nothing; for what is past and for ever gone is nothing.

What more dreadful than this parable of our Lord: "The rich man said to himself: I will say to my soul: Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, make good cheer. But God said to him: Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, and whose shall these things be which thou hast provided."

If we make ambition and the love of human applause the end of life, then we are only blowing up an empty soap-bubble, which rises a short distance in the air, then bursts and no sign of it is left.

Thank God, the night is passed; the night of ignorance is over. Every well-intentioned person can see his way plain before him. The road is straight; there are no crooks and bends in it. We have only to go straight forward and we shall not miss it. The light is somewhat dim, but there is always enough to see our way. This is the road of God's commandments. As we travel this road the light gets stronger and stronger. If we persevere, in a short time we shall have a perfect day. The glorious Sun of Justice will arise and our happiness will be complete and eternal.

So the Apostle tells us to put away the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. There is light enough around, but the eye may be darkened. Something may be the matter with it that it is blinded. What is it that blinds the eye of the soul? It is sin, or the works of darkness; for all sin is a work of darkness.

Whatever deludes and deceives us as to what is true and what is false spreads darkness over the soul. The light of reason is put out by the false glare of sin. Where the passions are excited, we all know how difficult it is to hear the voice of reason. When anger is aroused greatly, often murder is committed. When avarice is awakened, then robbery, stealing, and cheating are committed. The passion of lust leads often to the greatest crimes. Nations have been ruined and thousands of lives sacrificed to gratify this blinding passion. Sins are emphatically works of darkness.

The one in sin shuts his eyes. He will not see the light our Lord Jesus Christ has shed abroad so abundantly. The more light there is the more obstinately the eyes are closed to it. In vain God speaks and threatens. In vain does the conscience cry out in alarm. The poor deluded sinner drowns all such voices by plunging deeper into all sorts of excesses. The drunkard drowns the voice of his con-

science in drink. The covetous money-grasper cannot let go his ill-gotten goods, and he promptly puts away every thought of doing anything of the kind; you might as well try to tear out his heart as to make him forego the unlawful pursuit of gain. The impure man becomes the slave of his passion—the most domineering and the most destructive of all the passions. Those who practise these works of darkness are on the road of disobedience, which leads directly to ruin and eternal death. Woefully deceiving themselves, they sell their eternal birthright for a mess of meat and their immortal souls for a song.

But St. Paul says we must not only put off the works of darkness, but we must put on the armor of light. In old times they wore an armor of steel to protect the body from the swords and battle-axes of their enemies. There was the helmet for the head, and the breast-plate for the breast, and other pieces. It was of no use to have this armor unless it was put on. We must put on the armor of light. Our faith—what God has revealed as to the salvation of our souls—is that armor.

We must clothe ourselves with that armor, or we shall be hewn down by the assaults of temptation. We must have the fear of God before our eyes. “Know, O Man, that for all this God shall call you into judgment.” The

scene of the last judgment must be before our eyes, and the sentence pronounced on the wicked, "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," must ring in our ears. When tempted to impurity, to dishonesty, to revenge, to neglect of important duty, we must have on the armor of light, so as to say : Begone from me, temptation of Satan. I cannot do this thing. I cannot afford to lose the joys of heaven for which I was created. I cannot afford to bring on myself the companionship of the devil and his angels. God help me, keep me by thy Divine power from yielding to this temptation ! Thus shall we, according to the Apostle, walk honestly as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy ; but putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and not making provision for the flesh and its lusts.

And God will help us ; and that too most effectually, according to the Scripture : "Let God arise, and all his enemies shall be scattered, and they that hate him shall flee before him." Our spiritual enemies overcome, we shall persevere and get the final victory—our eternal reward in Heaven.

## MIRACLES A PROOF OF REVELATION.

*(Second Sunday of Advent.)*

Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.—*St. Matthew xi. 4, 5.*

ST. JOHN the Baptist was in prison. His disciples gathered around him. They revered him as a great prophet. But St. John wished to detach them from himself and to send them to Jesus. Therefore he told them to go to Jesus and inquire, "Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another?" He knew himself perfectly well who Jesus was. He had baptized him in the Jordan, saw the dove descend upon him, and heard the voice, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But he wanted to convince his disciples of the same truth. They asked the question, and our Lord replied in the words of the text: "Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." And this answer of our Lord was intended for them and for us, and for all men as long as the world shall last.

Our Saviour from his early childhood lived at Nazareth, an obscure little town in Galilee, a

remote province of Judea. He worked in the carpenter's shop of Joseph, a poor man of that town. He had little schooling, the slenderest education. But suddenly, at the age of thirty, he began to teach. He proclaimed himself the long expected Messiah to deliver his people from bondage. More than that, that he was Divine, the only begotten Son of his Father, equal to his Father; not created, but from all eternity. How was he to convince his hearers that what he said was true? It was by the miracles he wrought—mighty works which no human power could accomplish. He preached to the people, to the poor and simple as well as the rich; showed them their duty and how to reach heaven by becoming his disciples; and then he wrought innumerable miracles, healing the sick by a word or a touch; so that they believed, and they said, This man cometh from God, for no man can do what he does unless God is with him.

When God makes a revelation of his will to men, he must certainly make it in such a way that we may be sure it comes from him. Now, I do not see how it can be made in this way without miracles. The miracle is the proof that the message comes from God. When the messenger declares that he is sent from God to deliver the truth, the question arises, How do we know that such is the case? The answer is,

Let my works speak for me ; if I do that which man cannot do, then it is evident I speak by Divine Authority. That is the reason our Lord wrought so many miracles and such evident ones, that every sincere, right-minded man should be compelled to believe, and be responsible and culpable if he did not believe.

“ Woe to thee,” he says, “ Corozain ; woe to thee, Bethsaida : for if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.” It is the fashion nowadays, particularly among proud and conceited people, to refuse all belief in miracles, and to laugh and sneer at all who do believe in them. They want to discredit all the miracles of the gospel, and say it can be believed just as well without the miracles as with them. I should like to ask, What would be left of the gospels if all the miracles were taken out of them ? or would the Christian religion have conquered the world as it did ? would all the generations of men have had it handed down to them without these miracles ?

But they say miracles alter the natural course of things, and God would never do that. Does not God watch over and guide each one ? Does he not know everything we do, and do we not feel responsible for our actions ? If what they

are so positive about it, then God, having set the world agoing, must let it work on like a machine without taking any further care of it. Then prayer is of no account, for prayer could never make any difference, and all personal relations with God become absurd.

No; God has made us; he watches over us; he can do and will do what is for our good. And if a miracle is for our good, he will accomplish it—whether through his complete knowledge of natural laws established by himself, unknown to us, or by a direct exercise of his Divine power.

But how can we know that a miracle is not a deception, or really a natural event, although seemingly a miracle? We may admit that there are many extraordinary events which seem miraculous, but which on investigation can be accounted for from natural causes; that many extraordinary things may come from fraud and trickery, but still there are others which are evidently miraculous. We can easily imagine many things which, should they happen in our presence, we could not hesitate a moment in regard to their miraculous character. When a cure takes place slowly and with the application of medicines, even if it is quite extraordinary and almost unheard-of, we might hesitate. But when it is instantaneous and complete, there is no possible explanation;



and we have to say, the finger of God is here. This was the character of the miracles of our Lord. Those who had been blind for years, even from birth, and who were known to their neighbors and friends, were restored to sight at a word. The same with the lame, the paralytics, those in raging fevers; all sorts of diseases were healed. All the sick and afflicted, and the lepers, who were numerous; the crazy and demented of a whole town were healed at once; so that thousands and thousands, carried away by joy, flocked around him and accompanied him from town to town, even across the Sea of Galilee, where he had retired to be alone.

Now, consider the object of these miracles. It was to prove the truth of his Divine Mission. To prove he was the Messiah—the Saviour of the world; what he claimed to be, the Son of God, equal to his Father. According to St. John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Before the truth of the Revelation was established, miracles, which were necessary to establish it, were numerous; afterwards they became less frequent. But still they continue from time to time; no doubt to console us, to enliven our faith, to establish the sanctity of great servants of God who are canonized. No one is canonized unless undoubted miracles

are wrought by which God certifies to his sanctity. In these latter days many miracles have been wrought. I may mention the sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, where they have happened in great numbers; have been subjected to the strictest examination, and abundant proof has been required; so that to deny them, it seems to me, one must deny his own reason, and refuse to believe anything whatever. We ought to thank God for his goodness in thus displaying his power, and be filled with rejoicing at the certainty of our faith; and to be animated to serve God with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength, that we may attain to that glory which is promised and which these miracles foreshadow.

Should we ask for miracles ourselves? I do not say no in all cases. We may ask God's help in extreme distress. As a general thing it is better not. It is better to be satisfied with God's guidance. If we ask, we should always ask with great humility; and add, as our Saviour did, "Not my will but thine be done."

There is one kind of miracle we need not be afraid to ask for, *i.e.*, the spiritual miracle: the changing of our hearts and minds into the image and likeness of our Saviour. Are we not blind to the truth? How little we know! How are we not blinded by self-interest, by pleasure, by riches and honors, and by our

passions! Unless God helps us, how blind we are! Let us cry out continually to our Saviour, Lord, that I may see! He will hear and open our eyes. Are we deaf? Yes indeed, we are very deaf; the world around us makes such a noise that we cannot hear the Gospel. We cannot hear the still small voice of the Holy Ghost speaking in us. Oh! how much we are losing for eternity by this deafness and hardness of heart. Let us cry out, that Christ may open our ears and our hearts to true wisdom. We are lame and paralyzed by past sin and love of pleasure; let us pray that we may walk to Mass, to confession, to do God's will. Above all, are we dead in sin? Have we broken God's commandments by impurity, drunkenness, avarice, malice? God can work the miracle and bring the dead to life.

What heavenly peace and joy will fill our hearts when we are healed, as it filled the hearts of those poor blind, deaf, and lame when they were restored to health. Bodily health is nothing compared to the health of the soul. When bodily health is restored it is only for a little while, for we must all shortly die; but spiritual life and health restores us to immortal life, when we shall hear celestial music, go wherever we wish, see God face to face, share in his glory and power and knowledge, contented and satisfied for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PUTTING DOWN OF SELFISHNESS, AND THE MEANS OF SO DOING.

*(Third Sunday of Advent.)*

No man can serve two masters ; for either he will hate the one, and love the other : or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and Mammon.—*St. Matthew vi. 24.*

WHEN our Lord Jesus Christ instituted his Church on this earth it was not for its own sake, but to promote the salvation of souls. She is rightly called Mother Church, because she was instituted for the very purpose of acting a mother's part toward us in nourishing us and educating us for the Kingdom of Heaven. The true and real Church of Christ has always exercised this office for her children, and always will. For she is the bride of Christ, and has a most true and interior perception of the meaning of Christ's words and instructions.

Now, the Church has always insisted strongly on the necessity of a mortified and self-denying life in order to reach our heavenly home. She and the world have been at swords' points in this respect : the world declaring loudly that self-denial is wrong and injurious, particularly if carried to any great extent ; and the Church as loudly proclaiming that it must be carried into all the details of life, and used in indiffer-

ent actions, as a means of acquiring spiritual strength and the love of God. I want to show you to-day that the Church is right and the world is wrong in this respect.

Our Saviour in the text brings out strongly the principle that no man can serve two masters with fidelity. We all understand this is the case where the two have interests opposed to each other; for then when he undertakes to serve one, he is destroying and ruining the other. He is obliged to play false to one or the other of the two, or he could not really and truly serve either of them.

Now, I say that God and the world, or selfishness (for I call the two by the same name), are masters whose interests are opposed to each other, and as we serve one of them faithfully we must just so much betray and despise the other.

Acknowledging God as the Infinite Wisdom, his precepts challenge perfect obedience, and all deviation from them must be the greatest of all losses or mistakes. It is not merely that he is the infinite power and can compel us, but his infinite wisdom produces the most entire conviction of the right and duty of obedience on our part, even if no positive punishment were threatened for disobedience. Just as if you knew the most perfect and best way of building a house, and should deviate from it,

you would not only subject yourself to trouble and expense without return, but your own mind would convict you of playing the fool. Now you see what kind of a master God is, and what kind of obedience we must pay him. But we are creatures of a peculiar constitution. We are of a mixed nature. We have a part of us in the likeness and image of God, and a part of us in the likeness of the animals, or brutes. A spiritual and godlike reason on the one hand, and the inclinations of the body on the other. The reason is the voice of God in the soul; and if left to itself, without being interfered with, it would have God for its master, and serve him entirely. But the passions and inclinations of the lower nature continually urge and impel us to their own gratification. They are a sort of blind force pushing us on where we do not wish to go, where we understand we ought not to go. God and the disposition to the gratification of our senses and passions are the two masters who are continually striving for the possession of our souls.

Does not our own experience tell us that this is so? When we are quiet and unmoved by passion or inclination, there is no difficulty in serving God. The idea of having him for a complete master and of serving him entirely is then most delightful; but in ever so short a

time afterwards, when the storm of some passion arises, the conflict between our better reason and this inclination may be so strong as to almost tear us asunder. For example take a drunkard: he comes to a mission, hears the eternal truths preached; his faith is excited, his reason appreciates the necessity of entire obedience to God, and he abandons the slavery of his appetite for drink. But by and by, when the impression is worn off and he gets careless, this appetite rises up like a wild beast and devours him. So lust and avarice and anger are the wild beasts always lurking and ready to devour us.

These passions of our nature are not evil of themselves, because they are given for a good purpose. The pleasures of eating and drinking, for example, are useful to urge us to take the food and drink necessary to preserve life and health and strength. But they must be kept within the bounds of reason; otherwise they do no good, but only mischief. In other words, they must be the servants of right reason and always under its control. Here is the difficulty. They seek simply their gratification, and require us to be ever on our guard, ever watchful, to keep them within bounds.

From this it must be evident to the dullest comprehension that there is constant room, and constant necessity, for mortification. We must

deny ourselves in our inclinations, or they will master us. Hence our Lord says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." This self-denial must pervade all the actions of life; it must extend even to those things which are innocent of their own nature, and not sinful at the time. The man who goes on the principle of gratifying his desires up to the limit of what is forbidden, will find that he will sooner or later overstep that limit. His appetite for pleasure will increase upon him, and his appetite for virtue will decrease, until he will no longer have God for a master, but pleasure will be his master and his tyrant, and he will be powerless to throw off the yoke.

Again, the service of God requires attention and care. God is a pure spirit and the things of God are spiritual and invisible, while the world and pleasure are visible and tangible. Unless constant attention is given to the things of God, they will disappear from the memory, and only worldly things will be thought of from day to day or from week to week. From this it is clear that we must withdraw our attention from worldly things and bestow it upon God; in other words, we must mortify and check and diminish our desires—every one of them which is not for God.

We hear people complain all the while that



they are not pious ; that they have no appetite for devotion or for prayer. The reason is plain enough. They give full scope to every desire that arises in their souls ; they do not check them in any way, and of course their minds and hearts are so full of these desires that God and his affairs have no room. The remedy is to withdraw so much attention from these things ; to watch the movements of their own hearts, and to check those eager and vehement desires which have occupied them. Then there would be some chance for something better to get hold of them. We are very ready to criticise the saints and holy men who have practised great and extraordinary mortifications. We say, What is the use of so much fasting and prayer ? Why so much hard labor and deprivation of all comfort ? Why such short sleep and so little rest ? We pronounce this folly and superstition without hesitation. Yet if a man were to fast the whole day for the sake of gaining a hundred or even fifty dollars we should see nothing strange or fanatical about it. If any man were to deprive himself of sleep for the sake of attaining political or military eminence we should applaud his heroic conduct.

Now, what men of the world do every day for their own advancement, or that of their families, the saints have done for immortal

interests ; for success in the business of an immortal participation in the happiness of the infinite Beauty and Wisdom. They sat down deliberately and made the reckoning. They said, What is the object to be gained? No less than God Himself. What are the obstacles in the way of gaining him? My passions, my desires and inclinations. Then I will remove these obstacles out of the way ; I will never rest until they be my servants and I the complete master of them. Who shall condemn those who, led by the Spirit of Wisdom, have had a greater fervor than we have dreamed of ; who have despised and trampled under foot, like dung, all that we are so taken up with, that they might be more free and untrammelled in the pursuit of God?

We are not, probably, called to perform any such extraordinary fasts or discipline, or labor and hardship, as they did. But their conduct ought to afford us an example to be practising such mortification and self-denial as shall be suitable to our condition and states in life. It ought to tell us to adopt the same principle that they did. To apply self-denial, consistently, constantly, to the bringing under subjection every motion of our souls which is an obstacle in our way to the love of God.

Now let us see how we may practise this with great advantage. In the first place, arm

yourself with a great desire to increase in the love of God, for this ought to be your motive in the practice of self-denial. St. Paul says, and says truly : " If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." All our self-denial and deprivation, if it flows not from the motive of the love of God, is only plaguing ourselves for nothing. More than that, it is worse than nothing ; for it will be sure to proceed from pride, and only increase pride in us and separate us further from God.

But if we say, and keep saying within our hearts, " I will do this for God," " I will do without this because I think it will be pleasing to God for me to give it up," then it is very good.

Oh ! if we could only recollect this all the day, and apply it whenever we get a chance, what a vast amount of self-denial we should practise. And it would be a real pleasure to practise it ; we should do it so cheerfully that it would hardly seem to be a self-denial at all.

At the table we should go without many a delicacy ; we should refrain from excess in quantity ; we should learn temperance and moderation, instead of being the brutish slaves of appetite. If the victuals are not well cooked

or behind time, we should learn not to break out in a rage and become soured and disagreeable for the rest of the day. We should refrain from biting and uncharitable remarks, which contain much sin, and rejoice that God had put in our way an occasion of imitating the mild and gentle behavior of Christ, who was never known to break into impatience when hungry or tired or lacking a place to lay his head.

We should learn to be frugal and sparing in all our personal expenditures, for we should be anxious to have something to give to God in the persons of the poor of Jesus Christ. We should remember those words: "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of these my least brethren, ye did it to me."

We should run with alacrity, never sparing our own ease or convenience, whenever we saw a chance to do good. What a vast amount of sweet self-denial here is; opportunity is never wanting. Finally, we should mortify the tongue considerably. Many and many a word would die on the tongue, without coming out to wound charity; many a boast would be shut off, and pride be mortified; many an idle or foolish speech to wound one's self or another would cease. To rule the tongue is vastly mortifying, and enough, if well done, to sanctify one.

The feet would be mortified by being refused permission to go to many a place they want to go to. Many an immodest dance would cease, many an idle walk, much useless waste of valuable time. Only let one ask himself, What is there in me that is an obstacle to the love of God? and not one of the senses of the body; or faculties of the soul, but would come in for its share of mortification and self-denial.

We ought to practise self-denial as a person learns an art—for example; music. He finds his fingers at first stiff and slow, but he practises pages on pages of exercises. They are not pleasing; they are not regular pieces of music; they are only devised to exercise the muscles of the fingers and make them limber and ready to obey the orders of the mind. Hour after hour for many years are spent in thus exercising the fingers, until they finally execute the most difficult pieces of music with the rapidity of thought. It is a slow but sure process, and leads to most surprising results.

If we would try to render our stiff and unbending wills active and ready for the service of God, by crossing and diminishing our vehement and uneasy desires, we should acquire amazing facility in prayer and communion with God. We should learn to love him above

all things. Our hearts would be like a balance. As the scale of pleasure becomes light so would the scale of the love of God become heavy. As one scale goes up so the other goes down.

Holy Church prescribes fasting and abstinence at certain times. What for? To teach us to deny ourselves in other things for the love of God. To teach us to be watchful and ever ready to cut off everything that will be a weight or a hindrance in advancing in God's love.

Let us, then, do so. Let us be on the watch to mortify everything in our thoughts, words, and actions that is sinful in the least degree; everything which is in any way contrary to the meekness, the charity, the patience of Jesus Christ; everything which we can cheerfully do without and suffer no harm, or do no harm to others; let us do without it in the name of the Lord, and thus empty our hearts as much as possible of all that is earthly and temporary. For God will then fill them, and we shall be rendered fit for and sure of the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

## NECESSITY OF PENANCE.

*(Fourth Sunday of Advent.)*

Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.—  
*St. Luke xiii. 3.*

IF we are not in the state of grace when we depart this life, we shall be banished from the face of God for all eternity ; we shall inhabit the abodes of desolation and despair ; we shall be everlasting shipwrecks, and the glorious destiny for which we were created will be lost ; we shall never enter the port of heaven, but be drowned in the waters of destruction.

Now, as soon as we commit mortal sin we fall out of the state of grace, and are in the state of damnation. We are not in the friendship of God but of his enemies, and, if death overtakes us in this state, there is no remedy—the door of salvation is shut and we are left in the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Penance is the only way of recovering the state of grace. “ Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.” And what is penance ? It is to return to God once more by a sincere regret and sorrow for sin, and the firm determination never more to offend him by any mortal sin ; and in these dispositions to confess

those sins to the priest of God, who will give absolution for them.

The principal part of penance is the true contrition of the penitent, by which he turns away from his sin with horror and disgust, and turns towards God completely, with desire and determination to serve and love him to the best of his ability.

As I said just now, nothing will take the place of this true repentance. You may do anything else—it will not help you ; for except you do penance you shall all likewise perish. Some are so foolish as to think they can purchase forgiveness and salvation with money. Just as if the Almighty God who created the world by the word of his mouth cares anything for money ; are not all the gold and silver of the universe his already ? If in mortal sin, or in the habit of committing mortal sin, all the gifts in the world will not buy you off. “ Amen I say to you,” says our Lord, “ unless you be converted, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

This is what the Pharisees did, deluding themselves ; and our Lord said to them : “ Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left the weightier things of the law—judgment and mercy and faith.”

The Pharisee who went up into the Temple



to pray evidently thought he was in God's favor because he fasted twice in the week and paid tithes on all he possessed ; but did he repent, did he deplore his sins, did he resolve to forsake them all and serve God, begging for grace to keep these good resolutions? Evidently not ; he was not justified. Are there not some who try to salve over their consciences by substituting something for obedience to God's commandments?—for example, saying : “ I will go to Mass often, and when I am in the church I will ask for forgiveness. I will acknowledge myself a sinner and say some prayers. I will drop something in the poor-box. God will not be so hard on me. I will continue just in that one sin—that drunkenness, or that impurity, or that bad habit. The temptation is too strong to be resisted ; by and by I will do better. I am no worse than many of my acquaintances.”

This is extreme folly, for we cannot make any such bargain with the Infinite Majesty ; he sees through all such hypocrisy. “ Be not deceived, for God is not mocked.” If you are weak and temptation is strong, cry aloud for help ; ask and beg to be lifted up and set upon your feet, but do not delude yourself with the idea that it is all right and that you can continue on in your sin.

This is what God says : “ Cast away from

you all your prevarications in which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel. Turn away, turn away from your most sinful ways: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

This it is to do penance. And this your own heart tells you to be absolutely necessary. If you have turned away from God to follow your own lusts and wickedness, you know you cannot be restored to his favor as long as you remain in the same evil disposition. If you had an enemy who hated you, you might forgive him for God's sake; but you could not trust him and act towards him as if he were friendly to you. God knows all things; and if you hate him and despise him, he cannot in justice and truth forgive you. If you do penance, then he is only too glad to forgive. "When the impious man shall do penance for all the wickedness he hath committed, he shall live and shall not die. I will not remember anything of all the wickedness he hath committed. In the justice he shall do, he shall live."

Another reason why penance is absolutely necessary is the consideration of our own good and happiness. Every creature seeks its own good—it seeks it all the time. Reasonable beings seek what they esteem the greatest

good. Alas ! they often cheat themselves and sacrifice real happiness to a mere show of it. How often murder is committed to gratify a momentary passion of anger, and a life-time of horrible misery pays for it. How often disease and death are the consequences of the sin of a moment ! People have indeed sacrificed life itself for a mere bravado and boasting. All the good of this life is like the clouds which are blown across the face of the sky. It is given us to enable us to seek the good which is imperishable and immortal. Our Lord Jesus Christ has made known to us clearly that which we already suspected, that the only true good consists here in keeping God's commandments and living according to God's will ; for that will secure for us immortal life, in which all evil and all sorrow shall be for ever removed, and every good we could possibly desire given us in superabundance. How awful is the thought of being deprived of all this for ever and ever, to live on and not be able to die, in a hopeless state ; to know that it is our own fault ; that we made our own bed in which we must lie, and this for all eternity. When a life-time of man is over, no death will come to our relief ; when a thousand years have flown by it is not even beginning, when a thousand times a thousand years have gone it is no nearer the end. The very thought of

losing our souls ought to make our flesh creep with horror and the hair stand upright on our heads. It is absolutely necessary that we should be saved, and if we are in sin it is absolutely necessary that we should get out of it, and there is no other way but to *do penance*.

What is it to do penance? It is to conceive a horror of sin—to think of the woeful consequences of it. God by his holy grace stirs up such thoughts in our hearts. We remember our wickedness; it stands up before us; we think how outrageously we have violated his commandments. How we have heaped up sin on sin. How we have turned a deaf ear to all the admonitions of God's voice within us. We see that sin is a cause of misery; that there is no good in it, but bitterness and self-reproach and disgust; that, in the expressive language of Scripture, it is only the useless husks which even the swine cannot eat.

So we wake up out of our dream and come to a knowledge of ourselves. We see ourselves as we really are, and as God sees us. What a blessed light it is! How thankful to God we ought to be for it! It may be painful, but it is a happy and glorious pain which, like a blessed medicine, brings us health and strength and cheerfulness and joy.

Suppose your father or mother never correct-

ed you or punished you in your childhood, but let you go on doing just what you pleased ; you would pay for it dearly the rest of your life, and you would never 'cease to blame them for their mistaken kindness. God inflicts this pain upon us like a good father, to bring us to our senses. "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I continue in thy paths." And being in extreme sorrow at the sight of our sins, and being helpless, we cry out to God. We say to ourselves : "In my Father's house there is abundance of all things, and I am perishing with hunger." He is my Father after all, and he must have a father's heart. I will go back to him. Yes, I will forsake all my evil ways. It is all I can do. I regret the past with all my heart ; but it is past and cannot be lived over again, and for the future I will not do as I have done. I will be faithful to the best of my power.

Feeling this great desire and his weakness at the same time, the repentant soul pours forth prayers and supplications for grace and strength ; prays earnestly and continually, in the church, at home, in the street, at work, and at rest, by night and by day ; and those prayers are heard and grace is given. Then, with sorrow for sin and firm resolution of amendment, confession is made, absolution is given, and we commence again to lead the life

of a sincere Christian. Do you want an example of how sincere penance is done?

King David was a man after God's own heart. He obeyed God, loved him and prayed to him. But he forgot this at one time and sinned grievously, tempted by wicked lust. He was guilty of adultery and murder. God permitted this as an example to teach us to be watchful and keep away from temptation. David remained awhile impenitent, until the prophet Nathan came to him and charged him with the sin. He described David's conduct in a parable of the meanness and wickedness of another man, and David exclaimed, "Such a man is not fit to live"; and Nathan said, "Thou art the man." And David was struck to the heart; the scales fell from his eyes, and he exclaimed in deep sorrow; "I have sinned against the Lord." Here was sincere penance; and how quickly forgiveness followed! "The Lord hath put away thy sin."

David did penance afterwards. He kept a fast for seven days, in sackcloth and ashes; he spoke to no one, but prayed and lamented; and when his child died, he accepted the punishment from God's hands with complete resignation. His whole life afterwards was kept in sorrowful remembrance. He accepted every affront in humility, and as sent by God, because he deserved it. He cried: "I

acknowledge my iniquity, and my sin is ever before me. I have watered my couch with my tears, and I have no rest day and night. Have compassion on me, O Lord, according to thy mercy: and according to the multitude of thy mercies blot out all my iniquities."

Such should be our penance all our lives. We should always deeply regret our sins; we should never forget them; always pray to be cleansed from them more thoroughly, and strive to accept from God's hand all the trials and troubles he shall see fit to send us. Thus we shall be acceptable to God, pass our days in peace and tranquillity, and receive our reward in heaven.

## Christmas Day.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.—*St. Luke ii. 14.*

THE feast of to-day celebrates the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was first announced to the world by an angel of heaven, speaking to the shepherds, in these words: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David."

It is indeed an occasion of the greatest and purest joy which the human heart can possibly experience, and I feel sure that if we could penetrate the true meaning of this event there is not a single soul in this congregation who would not feel this joy with his whole heart; there is not one who would not delight to consider all the events of this blessed night in thankfulness and love too deep for expression. "This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." What does this mean? It means that the Source and Fountain of all that is good, of all beauty and knowledge and happiness, the Infinite God Himself, on this day condescended to bring himself down completely and entirely to our own level. It means that the great God of



Heaven stooped to become a man of flesh and blood exactly like ourselves, and one with us. Moreover, that he came not as a full-grown man in stature and strength, but submitted to all the miseries and inconveniences of being a helpless infant, to struggle along and grow up to manhood through so many years, like all the rest of us. And for what purpose? That we might thereby be lifted up out of all our miseries; that we might find a perfect balm and consolation in all the conditions of life; that we might have a perfect rule and model for the conduct of our lives; that we might be the brethren of Jesus Christ, and therefore the true sons of God and participators in the glory and happiness, knowledge and power of an Infinite God for all the boundless ages of eternity. We must raise our minds to the height and grandeur of this idea, that we may be enabled to enter into the spirit of all that happened on this blessed night, of those events which brought so much "glory to God in the highest," and so much "peace to men of good will."

The circumstances of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ give the highest glory to God and the greatest peace and joy to the sincere and upright. What is the greatest glory which God can derive from man? It is,

clearly, that man should give him his heart. And what is this *giving his heart*? It is the sincere and full acknowledgment on man's part that God is the All Wise and the All Good; that he is nothing in himself, and beholden to God for all that he has.

God does not care for money, nor outward temples, nor human efforts of any kind for their own sake; they are of no consequence to him apart from the love which has offered them or produced them. If he needs money, does he not possess all the gold hidden away in the earth? Can he not erect by one word the earth full of churches, if he wants them? Can he not convert, by the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, as many souls as he sees fit without any help? Of course; he accepts these things because of the good will which accompanies them, and for no other reason.

Now, I say that our Lord Jesus Christ in his birth has given to God the greatest glory, because in it he has rendered the greatest acknowledgment of God's supreme power, love, and wisdom which it is possible for a creature to render to its creator. The Blessed Virgin Mary also participated most completely in every step. The Holy Gospel which narrates this is sublime in its simplicity. God chose Mary for his mother. She was poor and unknown, but in God "she lived and moved and had

her being." He had no human father, for he was conceived of the Holy Ghost. It was pure, spotless love of God stirring in her heart that drew down the Son of God to take his human form and nature from her. Glory to God in the highest for this spotless and purest conception of our Saviour in the womb of the Virgin. Mary, by a miracle of divine power, has conceived the Son of the Most High, and has been assigned to the protection of St. Joseph, a man of a perfect heart before God. They are living at Nazareth in the humblest manner, he earning a simple living for them by his trade as a carpenter. She is in daily expectation of the birth of her Son, and all preparations consistent with their means have been made for the comfort of the Child. The sentiment in her heart was, no doubt, "What can I do to show my love and my veneration for Him who shall be my God as well as my Son?" But suddenly she hears news: a decree has come from the Roman emperor that each one must go to his own city forthwith to be enrolled. She and St. Joseph are obliged to go to Bethlehem within so many days. Bethlehem is about one hundred miles from Nazareth. It takes many days to go and come back. The Child will be born before she can return to her home. **What bitter news this is: to have to leave**

her home in her situation; to have to travel so many days in an inclement season of the year; to be exposed to the weather, and more particularly to be thrown among strangers and in inns and public places at such a time! What trial more repugnant to it could human nature be called on to suffer? Glory to God, I say, in all this. What perfect homage and love the Blessed Virgin, and our Lord Jesus Christ through her, pays to God now. Not a murmur out of her lips. She looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, but saw only the holy will of God. It was not Cæsar Augustus, but the Almighty who had so ordered it for his own glory and our good. All reasoning about the matter was hushed at once. She gathered up a few most necessary things and started out on her journey, her heart as calm and peaceful as if no breath of trouble had blown over it. Had she been a mighty queen, ruling over a vast empire and heading an army to fight the battle of right and justice for the Lord, she could not have given more glory to God than by this unreserved acknowledgment of his wisdom and submission to his will. And this conduct of hers contains the deepest instruction for us. The same glory that Mary paid to God we can also pay him. The same kind of opportunities lie around us everywhere and at all

times—diamonds and pearls and precious stones, where we see nothing but worthless pebbles and dirt. Why do we not do as Mary did: submit ourselves unreservedly to God in the daily trials of life, and kiss his hand with affection, instead of fretting and worrying and making ourselves and everybody around us unhappy? Let us look away from ourselves and our own little petty feelings, and look up to God first of all, and we shall see, as in a clear crystal, the meaning and the bearing of everything, and we shall become saints, and great saints too.

Joseph and Mary went along their journey, on foot probably, many days and nights until they came to Bethlehem. How tired they must have been, and how glad at the prospect of rest and a roof to shelter them! But Scripture tells us, “There was *no room* for them in the inn.” St. Joseph inquires at every one of them, but the answer is everywhere the same: “There is no room.” He begs them for the love of God to give them a place, and points to the delicate condition of the Blessed Virgin to move them to compassion; but no one would listen to him. It is getting dark and they are wandering about in the open air, not knowing what to do or where to go. After awhile they come to a cave in the rock, and go into it. It is a shelter at least, and better than none

at all. It is a sort of opening in the solid rock about forty feet in depth and about twelve feet wide, narrowing up towards the roof. This is, after Mount Calvary, the most glorious and venerable spot on the whole earth, more solemn and awe-inspiring than the Temple of Solomon or the Church of St. Peter's at Rome, or any temple built with human hands. It was built by God himself, out of the living rock, as the house of reception for his only begotten Son. Thousands of pious pilgrims have visited it ever since, and will as long as the world lasts. Let us visit it in spirit, and kiss its walls with the true devotion of our hearts very often, and we shall obtain the same blessings as if we went there across the ocean on a pilgrimage.

Joseph and Mary went into this cave, and at midnight the Saviour of the world was born. We are told, simply, that "she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him up in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger." As his conception was miraculous, and out of the order of nature, so was his birth. Mary experienced no pain or sorrow or sickness at his birth. Filled with the Holy Ghost and overflowing with Divine Love, who can describe her joy when she saw the Word Incarnate, the Son of the Most High, in a

little Infant form lying on the floor of that damp cave, and heard his feeble cry? With the deepest reverence and unspeakable love she took him in her arms and wrapped him in the swaddling-clothes and laid him in a manger. Here we have the Creator of the world, completely unable to help himself or to preserve his own life; we have the possessor of all things destitute of even the comforts of the poorest beggar child; the most glorious Being in circumstances to bring upon himself the contempt and scorn of even those who claim little respect for themselves. Jesus is now a human being, and could a human being possibly display a more complete sacrifice of love and submission to the Divine Will than he did. When we look at Jesus lying in the manger, we find a rule of life perfectly complete and perfectly simple by which we can render to God all that he asks of us and attain our highest perfection.

Jesus is born in the deepest humility, without the least outward sign or show of his dignity; but he came to save the world, and God must manifest his birth openly. How was it to be done? In accordance with the dignity and glory of God.

Some poor shepherds were feeding their flocks in the dead hours of night. They were not wise men as the world reckons wis-

dom, but they were simple-minded men ; their wisdom consisted not in knowing a vast number of things, either useless or only how to eat and drink and sleep better and to be selfish, but in thinking on their Creator and aiming to please him in every thought and action and word of their lives. God revealed the birth of his Son not to the king or the high-priest, nor to the nobles and rich of the country, but to these innocent, pure-minded shepherds. "And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of the Lord shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them : Fear not ; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people : for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying : Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

How astonished these poor men must have been at this brightness and glory suddenly breaking forth before them—a glory and splendor surpassing all that this world could produce. They feared, but the word of the angel



drove all their fear away; a joy beyond all human joy took possession of them. So if we acknowledge the simple truth, that God is all and we nothing, except in him, and put away all falsehood and all that is contrary to this truth, and make it our business to live up to it, the glory of God shall shine around us and we shall be worthy to see Jesus Christ. This sight and enjoyment shall suddenly burst upon us, if not here, at least very soon, when the veil of our bodies shall be removed. This wondrous sight disappeared and the music of the angels ceased when the shepherds, full of the matter, said to one another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us." And without a moment's delay, leaving their flocks to take care of themselves, they hurried over to Bethlehem. They seem to have been guided by an angel, or perhaps by some light in the heavens, as the Wise Men were, for they came straight to the cave. And what did they find? Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger. What did they do? They recognized their God in spite of his poverty and weakness; they fell down on their knees and adored him. They shed tears of gratitude, they vowed everlasting and undying fidelity to him. They, in the expres-

sive language of St. Paul, esteemed everything in this earth as dung and filth in comparison of the excellent knowledge of salvation which had been granted them. How does Scripture describe their conduct: "And seeing, they *understood* of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this Child." Mary had a deeper understanding of these events: "And Mary kept *all* these words, pondering them in her heart." Then it says, "the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard, and seen, as it was told unto them."

This is the account of that great event which gave so much glory to God. At the same time how perfectly it betokens peace to men of good will! Jesus is the perfect model of good will. How perfect an example of his good will to God does he afford us as he lies there in the manger, a little, helpless infant. He seems to say to us: My brethren, all I ask of you is that you show your good will and take, as I did, everything from the hands of God which he sees fit to send you. I ask nothing extraordinary; only that. Be men of good will, and you shall enjoy peace in union with God in this world, and in the eternal world hereafter. Amen.

**BIRTH OF CHRIST IN THE SOUL.**

*(Sunday in the Octave of Christmas.)*

For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, his Almighty Word leaped down from heaven from his royal throne.  
— *Wisdom xviii. 14, 15.*

THESE are the words chosen by the Holy Church for the introit of the third Mass of Christmas. They express the wonderful transaction which took place in the cave of Bethlehem. There in the solitude of that lonely place, in the darkness of midnight, when all was still and even the brute creation had hushed its cry, and the stars and planets were making their silent way from the eastern to the western side of the heavens, the Almighty Word, the Eternal Wisdom, God the Son, the Second Person of the Divine Trinity left his throne in heaven and was born into this world, and became a little weak infant moaning and crying in the stable at Bethlehem. This event we have already celebrated with feastings and rejoicing both at home and in the church, with all the splendor of worship at our command, and all that is agreeable and pleasant at home. We have visited the little Infant in his crib, we have adored him with the shepherds, we have noted all the circumstances of his humble birth and laid them up in our hearts.

Now, to-day I would call your attention to another kind of birth of Christ; one which is of vast personal interest and immense importance to each separate individual. This birth is one which is typified and represented to us in the midnight birth at Bethlehem. I mean the spiritual and mystical birth of Christ in the individual soul. For it is this birth within us which is the very life and light of the soul. As the cave of Bethlehem was dark and dismal, and cold and cheerless as the grave, until the Divine glory illuminated it and it was filled by the angels who attended the Saviour, so are our hearts without hope and without joy unless the light and grace of God shall be born and dwell in them. Then and only then can the soul experience anything which is worthy to be called by the name of happiness.

When Nicodemus came to our Lord by night to ask him the way of salvation, our Lord said to him: "Amen, amen I say to you, except a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." And Nicodemus in astonishment said: "How can a man be born again when he is old?" So you may say: "How is it that Christ is to be born in our hearts? Are we not already baptized? Was he not born in our hearts at that time? When we lost the grace of God and were absolved after a sincere confession, was not then Christ born

in our hearts again? " Yes, all that is true; but still there is another sense in which he may be born in us, not once or twice, but thousands of times, every week, every day, every hour or moment of our lives. This I must endeavor to explain.

When a little infant is born into the world who loves it best? Undoubtedly it is its mother. Others may be indifferent to the little, helpless creature, but she is not. On the contrary, she fixes all her thoughts and all her attention upon it. She most ardently desires its welfare, and is willing to sacrifice her own convenience and pleasure for it. She devotes her life to its welfare, and foresees long years of devotion to its interests, and looks forward to it as her stay in her old age. Now, when we thus concentrate and fix our whole attention upon God, upon Jesus Christ, the Divine Word of God, and withdraw it from everything else that we may think upon him; when we conceive a longing and intense desire to have him for our own, to have him come and take entire possession of us; to change and mould and form us to his own image and likeness, so that all that is mean and low and defective in us may be removed, and we may be filled with what is high and noble and grand and entirely satisfactory, and become living images of the perfection of Jesus Christ and followers in all

respects of his example, then we become, as it were, mothers and fathers of the Divine Word, and he is born in our hearts. Then, in the language of the introit in the third Mass of Christmas, "a child is born unto us, and a son is given unto us." We cannot thus give up ourselves to him, in spirit and in desire, without drawing him from heaven, at that very instant, to be born again, in a way, within us. You see, then, that this kind of birth can be of daily and of hourly occurrence. As often as we turn to God with our whole heart, throwing ourselves, just as we are with all our misery and troubles, upon him, seeking him and him only, just so often is there a new and divine birth within us. "O father! tell me who is capable of making acts of such perfection? Look at me, laden down with imperfections, weak of will, surrounded with temptations, perplexed with cares and anxieties, all in a turmoil—how could I do such a thing?" I answer: to do so does not require that we should be already perfect—not at all. One may be very imperfect, even in sin, and yet he can do it, and it seems to me without any great difficulty. It is reasonable to do it. It is a thing we are impelled to do, and which we could hardly leave undone without violence to ourselves. How is that? The hungry man wants victuals, the naked man wants clothes,

the poor man wants money. Our own lack and want makes plenty and abundance most desirable and longed for. We see ourselves to be lacking in the goods of the soul. God has got plenty to give us. We see nothing secure and stable in this life, everything is at hazard and will slip away from us at last. God is the immutable, unchangeable, permanent, lasting Good. Sin and passion have made us miserable; in God all these things are removed away from us. Anxiety and distraction come from creatures. God is perfect undisturbed peace. How can we even think on these things in the least without longing for them, without longing for the fountain and source of all good—God. It is easy and natural, even for the imperfect, to turn to God, and they must do violence to themselves not to do so.

When we thus turn to God, whether more or less perfect, we receive an immense grace, for God is then as a little, feeble infant within our souls. The only trouble is that we do not do this often enough to make it habitual with us. We allow the infant Saviour to be stifled and driven away from us by becoming immersed in worldly affairs, and become completely taken up by them.

But, you ask me, how shall we thus recollect ourselves and become filled with the spirit of God? I have already told you that every time

you turn to him with your whole heart that this divine birth takes place, even if it be imperfectly and for a short time. But that it may take place more effectually and permanently we should endeavor to recollect ourselves more. We should take more time, and drive out all things from our mind which are not of God, that we may occupy ourselves with him alone. This the text indicates: "When all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, his Almighty Word came down from heaven from his royal throne." We should bring our souls, as far as possible, to a quiet silence; reject and throw out all disquieting and anxious thoughts, all eager and tumultuous desires, and realize that we are alone with God—to treat with him on the affairs of our souls. The night ought to be with us then, in the very middle of her course—a midnight darkness and silence cover up and make invisible all things of the world.

When we go to prayer we lose a great deal because we do not take care to calm our passions and put down the tumult of our minds; we hurry over a few prayers, perhaps out of a book, but we have never retired into ourselves, have not withdrawn from the world, and God does not visit us. If he did we should not be aware of it, for there is too much noise within us, so that we cannot hear his voice. We read



of St. Catherine of Sienna that, when overloaded with work in order to keep her from prayer, she built an interior sanctuary within her own soul, into which she allowed only God to enter, driving out all other things, and thus she became more recollected and absorbed in God than ever. What she could do in the kitchen and in active work about the house we ought to do in the stillness and solitude of our own chambers. What an incalculable benefit we should receive did we thus recollect ourselves, and withdraw with God, even once in each day. This is the signification of what God said to Abraham: "Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and the house of thy father, and come into the land which I shall show thee; and I will bless thee and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed." What was this land he was to go out of? It is the flesh, with its sensual lusts and all evil desires, which so occupy us. And what are these kindred and this father's house? The business and occupations of life, the anxious and distracting cares, forebodings, and fears of the future, passionate attachments to various objects of desire, all excessive joy or sorrow. When we do this we come into another land—our spiritual country—and we are blessed with all good, even God himself. But to go out of our country and from our kindred, from all

those desires and anxieties which beset us—that is the trouble. How many say, “My prayers are all a distraction; I am filled with worldly thoughts, and with my business and occupations, and cannot recollect myself.” You ought not, I say, to be so filled up by these things. It is folly and nonsense to allow them to have such an habitual hold upon you. You should check these unruly passions and desires, and not let them run away with you. If you give yourself up to distraction, and implicate yourselves in all sorts of unnecessary and even injurious things the whole blessed day, how can you expect to recollect yourself? I venture to say you could pay all necessary attention to your business, no matter how much it might require, and yet maintain a recollection through it all. Whatever is proper and right to do you can make the intention to do for God, or to please him—and that itself is a recollection. If you cannot make such an intention about the thing, depend upon it, it is something unlawful or hurtful which you should let alone. If you renewed this good intention a few times, even for a moment, during the day, you would be able to withdraw from business and find God, more particularly at night.

Now I will tell you a time when you have an excellent opportunity to retire to the solitude of the cave of Bethlehem, to realize the presence

of God in your soul. It is on the Sunday at the Mass—particularly at the High Mass. Many cannot go to High Mass, but a vast many do not attend it who could if they would. They do not go because religious things are irksome to them; they want to get through them and be done with them just as soon as they can. They do not wish to lose their souls exactly, and so they go to a Low Mass; but they go unwillingly and as a matter of form, and they pray very little. Such folks, of course, cannot be expected to have any recollection. For those who can attend it the High Mass should be a golden opportunity to acquire recollection. It is natural for people who are occupied much by business and cares to turn at intervals to religious things with a relish and delight. The Sunday is a green spot in the desert. They come to church; they witness the solemn ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice, they hear the soothing and majestic music of the Church. Everything floats them up above all the things of this world into a higher and purer atmosphere. Spend an hour in this way, and you will not lose the benefit for the whole week. The remembrance will be sweet and prompt many a prayer at other times. Think, then, when you are coming to the church, how precious an opportunity you have, and be determined to improve it and get all the good you

can out of it. You will soon find a gold mine where it was all copper before. Spend the time at High Mass in a recollected manner, and the next thing we shall see you at Vespers. You will not be able to stay away. You will realize that although you gained a good deal at Mass, you have an appetite for more, and are not satisfied unless you renew the spiritual impression. Instead of killing time by reading idle newspapers, or sleeping until you are stupefied, or in all sorts of vain, useless conversation, or in stuffing yourselves with too much food and drink to be good either for mind or body, devote the Sunday to the good of your soul, and you will soon see the difference. Recollection is soon acquired by the application of simple and easy means; and when the Divine Word has been born in our hearts, at first in a transient and momentary way, if we persevere he will at last be with us permanently. We shall find him whenever we seek him. He will come and seek us, and the words of Christ will be made true in our case: "If any one love me, my Father will love him; and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him." Amen.

## Sunday after New Year's Day.

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### WHAT IS A HAPPY NEW YEAR?

The night is passed, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light.—*Rom. xiii. 12.*

WE are celebrating now the closing of the old year and the opening of a new one, and the custom is when we meet a friend to say, I wish you a happy New Year. I suppose the meaning of this is, I wish that the year you are entering upon may be a happy one for you. And in this sense I can truly say, I wish every one of you a truly happy New Year—a year that will be the happiest possible; that will bring you happiness which will not be deceitful and cheat you with false appearances, and in the end bring misery; but a solid and substantial one, which will make you thoroughly satisfied and contented, and not tormented by regrets and remorse which leave you more dissatisfied and discontented than ever.

The span of human life is short at best, and every New Year's day reminds us that we are so much nearer to the end of our lives. It is not a very cheerful thought, but this makes no difference as to its truth. We are compelled to think it: "I am so much nearer the end of all

things as far as this world is concerned " ; and a silent voice speaks within us : Is it not better and happier to live right and avoid misery, rather than to live for the moment and for the pleasure of the day ?

I am sure that every one who will stop to think a little must answer this question in the affirmative. The man who is accustomed to reflect and to listen to reason will certainly do so. If he has been led astray by his passions, he will be convicted of folly whether he amends or not. And the thoughtless and unreflecting, who have followed the bent of their inclinations, will be obliged to acknowledge their folly and see their ruin in the end unless they amend.

And this will more especially be the case with Catholics. Not only the voice of reason will speak to them, but the faith in which they have been educated will speak loudly and unmistakably, and say : "You have gone on long enough ; it is high time to turn about and amend your lives. Go on sinning and breaking all God's laws, and you will have to give a strict account of it all. You have nothing to look forward to but complete and eternal ruin if you keep on as you have been going."

New Year's day ought to remind us that our happiness does not consist in gratification of the senses ; in indulgence in eating and drinking ; in rioting and drunkenness ; in impurity

and wantonness; neither, as many seem to think, in heaping up money, in possessing houses and lands and bank stocks; in being talked about and getting famous; in any worldly thing whatever which we propose to ourselves; for all these things will be ended and gone. And when they are gone, never to return, what do they amount to? It is the same as if they never were, as far as giving us any satisfaction; and for whatever wrong there was in them we will be accountable, and must suffer punishment.

To use a common phrase, "Let us learn wisdom by experience." Death has come to many in this congregation. Many of our friends and acquaintances have left this world for good and all. And how many have met a sudden and unprovided death; have been killed by some sudden accident, without priest or sacrament! And how many have been taken off by violent, rapid diseases; laid on a sick bed suddenly, racked with pains so as to be able to think of little else, and hurried into eternity with such slight preparation!

Who can tell that such will not be the case with himself before another New Year's day comes around. Well, then, be wise and make provision for such things while there is opportunity.

/ We are here on probation or trial. A certain

amount of time is allotted to us in which we are to show ourselves worthy of an immortal destiny. We do not know how much it is. God alone knows that. We have only to go into the grave-yard to see this proved in the most striking manner. There are the stones with the names upon them and the ages. How the figures vary in all sorts of ways! running from one to near a hundred—though the average is not the half of that.

What a wonderful disposition of Divine Providence is this: instead of giving us a fixed time, so many exact years, to make life wholly uncertain in duration. This is to keep us on the alert and wide awake, lest we be taken unawares and by surprise. As St. Paul says: "But of the times and moments, brethren, you need not that we should write to you; for yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord shall come as the thief in the night"; and our Lord Himself says: "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour." How many New Year's days have already gone over your head! How many years have been wasted in which you could have secured great treasures for the kingdom of heaven! How many will have to exclaim: "The summer is over, the harvest is nearly reaped, and I am not among the saved; not now even in the state of grace."



But it is of no use to consume the time in idle lamentation over lost opportunities. You are yet alive. You can get in the way of recovery. Turn away from all your evil courses and begin now to keep God's commandments faithfully, and all will be right. Even if it is the eleventh hour, our Lord goes around and says, Come and work in my vineyard, and I will give you the wages of eternal life.

I wish you a happy New Year because a happy year, if you choose, lies before you: a happier year than you ever enjoyed while in sin; a happier year than all the pleasures, all the honors, all the riches of this world could possibly afford you. If you have been traveling the down-hill road, I say, and you cannot deny it, you have had terror and misgiving in your hearts; you have been deeply dissatisfied; you have foreseen no outcome but ruin and destruction. You have been convinced of your complete folly. And what real happiness has this afforded you? Do not, then, march on any longer in this fatal road, but turn about and go in the opposite direction; and all this horror and dismay will cease. The demon will be driven out and you will sit up, clothed with the garment of divine grace, and once more in your right mind. But do not let this change be a mere flash in the pan, a momentary thing, which will be wiped out as soon as the enthu-

siasm passes away and a temptation comes in ; but take the means which the Spirit of God and your own good sense, which God has given you, dictates to you. Be in earnest, make a business of it, to deepen and strengthen your horror and detestation of sin, so that, as Scripture says, you will flee from it as from the face of a serpent. And from all the occasions of it : from the saloon, from evil companions, from any amusement which involves the danger of sin. Keep in mind what the very first psalm says : " Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence."

Sin is truly a pestilence ; it is catching ; keep away from it, or it will get hold of you and infect you with the poison of eternal death. But you say : " How shall I keep this disposition, and not forget it ? I am very weak, and I feel this weakness greatly." I am glad it is so. To feel one's weakness is a source of strength, because it makes us cry out to God, the source of all strength. God makes us feel our weakness that we may ask his help, and he is ready to give it when we ask for it. He then sees in us a good will, and that is what he wishes. So the psalmist continues : " Blessed is the man whose will is in the law of his God : who meditates on his law day and night."

II

III The law of God is the only real thing to care about, and it is worthy of being made our principal business ; all other things should be thought of as means to an end. The end is the law of God. Now, when God has given us the grace to see this, it is like giving us the great treasure hidden in the field, or the pearl of great price. We must value it, and take care not to lose it. And we shall not lose if we prize it, and we shall prize it if we meditate on its value. In other words, our continuance in grace, our perseverance, our final salvation, depends upon prayer. And when prayer has become habitual, and we resort to it in the same way that we do to our daily meals—breakfast, dinner, and supper—then we are truly blessed, then we are essentially happy. Let prayers, let acts of good will in all sorts of directions, against all sorts of temptations and bad inclinations, which spring up in our minds—let supplications proceed from our hearts and our lips, and we shall be secure, and we shall be consoled. For we shall overcome and be victorious, and satisfaction will fill our souls. Prayer will settle our difficulties ; prayer will give us comfort ; prayer will become a necessity for us which we will not be willing to go without. It will be the breath of our nostrils.

With prayer, when we go about our business or work, we will find God the Holy Ghost

present with us prompting us to good, and heavenly things will be in our minds.

If thoughts of business and worldly things force themselves on our minds, we will soon be tired of them, and be glad to get rid of them and come back to the life of the spirit. We shall not only know spiritual things, but taste them, and our appetite for them will grow and we shall not be satisfied without them.

Ask any good Christian—and, thank God, there are, plenty of them—and he will tell you it is so. He will say : “ Give me God’s grace, and I have all I desire. I care not whether I am rich or poor in this world so long as I get my place in heaven.” No matter what may happen I know that God is true, and he has said : “ All things work together for good to those who love God.”

Does not the psalmist also say of the man who makes the law of God the object and desire of his will that “ he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season ; and his leaf shall not fall off ; and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.” On this New Year’s day, then, make a new beginning. If you have been living in sin, cease at once from sinning. As far as you can see, do from henceforth the will of God, and God will no more remember your sins. And do not be afraid to

commit yourself into his hands, for he knows all about you, and will order nothing unsuitable. He will treat you just as a good father treats a son he is fond of. All will turn out well.

And if you are already striving to do your best, begin with a new fervor as if you had done nothing already. As St. Paul says: "But one thing I do: forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the heavenly vocation of God in Christ Jesus." With your face towards the mark you are getting nearer all the time. One year comes around after the other. Every New Year with profound humility and thankfulness you can rejoice. You can wish yourself a happy New Year. You can wish everybody else a happy New Year. After a few New Year's days you will be where you need not wish those you see any such thing, because you will have once for all not a happy New Year, but a happy eternity. Your fruit will then have been gathered in, in its due season. Amen.

## Sunday after Epiphany.

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And entering into the house, they found the child with Mary his mother, and falling down they adored him : and opening their treasures, they offered to him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh.—*St. Matt. ii. 11.*

THE Wise Men, who are supposed to be kings of the East, were led by the wonderful star in the heavens, and by the secret inspirations of the Holy Ghost, to Bethlehem, to find and adore the one who was born the King of the Jews. They found him after a long search in the stable, and they recognized in him, in spite of the poverty and the straw, the King of souls, the Creator of heaven and earth. With profound faith they adored him, and opening their treasures offered to him the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

We are all drawn to do the same thing in a similar way. The light of faith, for we have been instructed all about it, directs us to the poor stable of Bethlehem, where we behold the Lord of Glory disguised in the form of an infant, and it becomes us also to offer him our treasures of gold, incense, and myrrh.

And first, what is the pure gold which is acceptable to our God and Creator. By gold is meant charity, or the love of God. And

by this charity is understood, we should in all our works have a pure intention of pleasing God. The love of God does not consist in feeling good or in sensible devotion of tears and such like, which we often could not exercise if we desired it ever so much, but in a good and pure intention. This ought to be a great consolation and encouragement to us. We need not say, "I cannot love God." It is not true; we can. We might say with truth, "I cannot feel a warm love of God, for I am cold"; but make the right intention to love God, and you have the real, true, and solid love of him which will bring you by the quickest and shortest way to the kingdom of heaven. It is said that one of the old heathen kings had such avarice that he desired that all he touched might be turned into gold. Now, I wish it might be in like manner that whatever you touch with your heart—that is, whatever you desire or think of—might by a good intention be turned into the gold of the purest charity. Our Saviour said, Ye cannot so much as give a cup of cold water in charity in his name—that is, with an intention to please him—without getting a reward for it. The treasures of grace and merit lie in immense heaps all around us and we can help ourselves. Whether we eat or whether we drink, or whatever we do, let us do it in the name of the

Lord. I hope, then, you will all on this blessed festival determine to direct all your thoughts, words, and actions to the glory of God as well as you possibly can, and thus open your treasures, and offer to the Infant Saviour, lying on the straw, a great heap of pure, bright gold.

But the Wise Men of the East offered not only gold but frankincense. What does that signify? It means devotion. You have often seen the incense put into the censer at High Mass or Vespers; and the smoke arises straight upwards. It is a figure of prayers and the ardent wishes of the soul ascending up to heaven. The Scripture says: "And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God: and the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, from the hand of the angel" (Apoc. viii. 3, 4). The act of true prayer or adoration by which we acknowledge with our whole heart the infinite majesty of God and his complete dominion over us, our own complete nothingness of ourselves without him, and by which we declare and protest that we desire nothing else but that he should govern us, and dispose of us and all our affairs



as he pleases—this is the brightest and noblest act of our own reason. For what could we do so true and real as this? How could we realize in a better way the simplest and at the same time the most sublime truth. Our prayer ought to go up from our heart as out of a censer which contains a fire that no created thing is able to put out. The smoke of it should continually arise, and all we do should be done as in the way of a prayer and supplication to God, our last end and chief good.

Alas! we have incense enough to offer to idols; we swing the censer to wealth, honors, and pleasures; we bow the knee and worship houses and lands and cattle, and fine clothes and sumptuous fare, and sell our very souls for a few pieces of gold; but we have but little incense for God, no pure and sincere homage for him—the eternal uncreated source of all Good.

And when you offer the incense of your adoration to God, offer pure and clean incense. Do not mix with the frankincense rosin or other foul-smelling drugs. And what are they? Those desires of the heart by which we cling to the creatures of earth with a passionate eagerness. Clear your heart of such desires, so that you may say: "My God and my all. My God, if I possess thee and lack all else, I am rich indeed. If I have the whole world

and all it contains, and have not thee, I am poor and blind and miserable and naked." Then will your prayer arise as a sweet odor from the golden altar before the throne of God, and innumerable blessings descend upon you both for eternity and here in this present life. Offer frankincense, or you will have no gold to offer. When you open your treasures if there is not plenty of incense—that is, prayer—you will find the chest in which you thought the gold was stored to be empty. For without prayer there will be no charity or love of God. Prayer is the food by which you keep charity alive and increase it. Prayer is the capital in trade by which you are to make your fortune in the charity of God, to enrich you for eternity.

And having offered your gold and frankincense, do not forget the myrrh. And what is signified by myrrh? It means self-denial, or, as it is more commonly called, mortification. I wish we all understood the value of self-denial better than we do, because all or nearly all the miseries which afflict the soul come from the fact that we do not deny ourselves near as much as we ought. We give the reins to our natural desires and inclinations, and they run away with us. Just as if we were driving a team of young horses and, instead of putting a curb-bit upon them and holding them in, we

should throw the reins down upon their necks and let them run. The faster they go, the faster they want to go, until they dash everything to pieces. So we let our desires for pleasure and amusement run away with all our pious inclinations and love for God. How can we love God and love good eating and drinking so much? Can God come and dwell in a soul that is all the time thinking of what he shall eat and drink? Can God put himself on a level with such things? How can God give himself to the man who is absorbed in money-making and heaping up possessions? It is impossible for such a soul to enjoy the presence of God. Neither can God divide the empire of the soul with worldly honors, nor even with a passionate human love of wife or children. He is God, and they are creatures, the mere work of his hand; they shall pass away and be gone, and he shall remain. All such things must be swept out of the soul. They must be used on account of God, and in subordination to his love, or God cannot enter in and dwell in it. This stands to reason.

We must deny ourselves, and that not merely in forbidden things, but in lawful things. If we go to the limit of what is lawful in self-indulgence, depend upon it we shall soon pass the limit. We shall fall into sin, and most likely into mortal sin. Many a one has fallen

in this way. He has said to himself: Oh! I can do this: it is not forbidden; and I can also do that: it is not forbidden; and thus he becomes utterly selfish, and virtue dies out in his soul. Our Saviour has laid down the rule for a Christian: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke xiv. 26). "And if a man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark viii. 34).

We must deny ourselves, and if we would be great friends of God we must deny ourselves a great deal. The fact is, in order to be possessed of God we must deny ourselves in all things, at all times, and in all places. We must repress and bring into subjection the desires of our hearts, so that they may not occupy and fill up our hearts. The Scripture says: "Be not solicitous, saying, What shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed, . . . but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice." Now, reflect on this: you cannot be thinking on both these things at the same time; one thought will crowd the other out. Therefore you *must* drive out of your heart those eager desires of the world and temporal things, about eating and drinking and clothing, about the future; in

other words, you must deny yourselves these earthly desires, or you will never become spiritually minded. If we could only drive out all solicitude and care for these things, and discharge our business and duties in life without anxiety, for God and for what God has appointed, we would be recompensed a thousand-fold here in this life, and our hearts would leap for joy and gratitude to God, who had inspired us with such resolutions. Offer myrrh, offer plenty of myrrh to God, offer it with gold and frankincense ; that is, with the intention of cleaning out and sweeping out from your heart all vain and useless love, that it may be ready and prepared for the Divine love, and with many prayers and devout wishes, and God will accept it. It will be most pleasing to him. Without this your self-denial would be in vain. Self-denial without the right intention is superstitious and nourishes an empty pride ; with it, the least act of self-denial renders you godlike, and more fit to receive the impressions of the Holy Ghost within your soul.

Begin, then, to offer myrrh with the gold and frankincense. Deny your eyes what they like to look on, that the eyes of your soul may look on God more steadily. Deny your ears what they wish to hear, news and gossip, letting alone detraction and evil talk, that you

may hear more readily the still small voice of the Holy Ghost in your heart, which is drowned by any great noise. Deny your smell as to odors and perfumes. Deny your palate delicate and luxurious food, that the plain and solid meat of the gospel may taste better. Deny yourselves all around whenever you can bring yourselves to do it cheerfully for the sake of God, for God loveth a cheerful giver. This is what the saints did, and it is what made them saints; and impelled by the strong desire to love God better, I dare to say that self-denial was the sweetest pleasure to them in this life. "Having food and wherewith to be clothed, they were content therewith," and the superfluous and unnecessary they abominated, for they knew it led them away from Jesus Christ.

Present these gifts, not only now but every day of your lives. God will give them to you, and then you must give them back to him faithfully, and in a short time he will give you a present which excels everything you ever thought of. He will give you himself, and inundate your happy soul in an ocean of inconceivable joy and unspeakable happiness, never to be lost for all the ages of eternity. Amen.

FESTIVAL OF THE HOLY NAME OF  
JESUS.*(Second Sunday after Epiphany.)*

And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.—*St. Matt. i. 21.*

THE name of our Lord, Jesus, signifies Saviour, as the text tells us, for "he shall save his people from their sins." If we are saved from our sins we are saved from everything that is evil or hurtful to us, and at the same time we are endowed with all good.

The things which we call evil or bad are not evil or bad in themselves; it is only the element of sin in them which makes them evil. Take sin away from them, and they are not evil but positively good. Take poverty, for example: there is hardly anything more dreaded than poverty; yet if it be endured, as coming from the hand of God, with patience and thanksgiving, it is the source of the richest blessings. It detaches the soul from the love of the world and things that pass away and are gone for ever, and frees it in such a way that it is united to God's will and to God, and gives it that peace which all the world cannot give, and spiritual joy and a foretaste of heaven. Or sickness and bodily pain, which we have an intense horror of. It comes

to us all more or less. If accepted from God's hand, it transforms us into the image and likeness of God, and burns away all the dross and impurity; though sin, impatience, murmuring against God, may by our own fault deprive us of the good it would bring us. And lastly death, which we dread the most, is not an evil if sin is absent; it is a deliverance from the evils of this valley of tears and an opening of the gates of heaven, where all sighing is ended and all tears wiped away, all anxiety for the future removed, and where we dwell for ever in the presence of God, who exerts his divine and almighty power to content us and make us happy.

What emotions of gratitude, of hope, and of love should be excited in our hearts at the sound of the name of Jesus, our Saviour from sin, our deliverer from the thralldom and slavery of sin! If we have ever been in the slavery of sin, as, alas! most of us must acknowledge that we have been, we know how bitter and miserable a condition it was. To be sensible that we have deliberately rejected God, that we have exchanged him for the vile and worthless pleasures of this world; to know that the indignation of God is hanging over us, and that if death should intervene we must be for ever separated from him; to be disgusted with ourselves and self-condemned, and desir-



ous of getting out of this horrible condition, and yet so bound up with vice and bad habits as not to be able to get loose; to be delivered and freed from this nightmare, this deception of Satan, and once more a free man—this is a joy and happiness which no joy of this world can equal. And this is what the sweet and holy name of Jesus signifies to us—Saviour and deliverer from our sins, not only in the world to come but here in this valley of tears, in this mortal life.

He who has tasted the sweetness of this holy name and its blessed effects, will find in it the safeguard and the tower of strength against the assaults of the enemy of mankind, and any return to the wallowing in the mire, the filth of a sinful life. Jesus the Saviour went about doing good: he gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf; he made the lame to walk; he dispelled fevers and palsies; he raised the dead to life. All these bodily ailments are figures and representations of what he does for the soul; the bodily ailments are nothing in themselves; the soul's ailments are real. And he by his mighty power heals them all. He enlightens us so that we see the evil of sin, the value of God's favor. He takes away our spiritual blindness. He makes us love truth and virtue and honesty when it is declared to us, and hate all filthy conversation and every-

thing that corrupts the soul; that is, he restores to the soul its hearing when we have been deaf. He makes us walk—takes away our laziness and indifference, and makes us lively and active in all good works. He removes our fevers and palsies of the soul, and succors us in violent temptations and in fits of depression and discouragement. “Come to me,” says Jesus, “all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”

When the holy Apostles went out to preach the Gospel to the heathen, those who were sick of all sorts of maladies were brought to them, and they were all healed at the name of Jesus. “In the name of Jesus take up thy bed and walk,” was what St. Peter said to the paralytic. So at the name of Jesus, pronounced in faith and with a disposition of obedience—in other words, with a live and not a dead faith, a faith made alive by charity or love—our spiritual sickness will disappear and we shall be restored to health. When we hear, then, this sweet name of Jesus, how can we help crying out: “Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name: who forgiveth all thy iniquities and healeth all thy infirmities, who saveth thy life from destruction and crowneth thee with mercy and loving kindness.”

Nor let us think this is enthusiasm or fancy,

for we have the word of our Saviour himself, and he is the eternal truth who can neither deceive nor be deceived. "Amen, amen I say to you, if you shall ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you." Whatsoever is good or conducive to our salvation he will give us; whatever is evil and hurtful to us of course he will not give us, any more than a father or mother would give a sharp knife to a child who cries for it. Jesus means Saviour, and what leads to salvation is asked in the name of Jesus. What is not so—although we use the word Jesus—we do not really ask in the name of Jesus the Saviour.

See how good God is to give us whatever we ask for in the name of Jesus. How powerful is that name, and how thankful we ought to be at hearing it! But some one may say to me: "Father, I have the faith, and my firm determination is to live according to it. I wish, and wish ardently, to love Jesus the Saviour, but my heart is cold and I do not feel that love I could wish to. It would be a consolation to me to feel an affectionate love of Jesus, but I am unable to produce this feeling. I am determined to serve God and keep his commandments, but I am fearful that something is wrong."

No, I say there is nothing wrong about that. You have the true love of Jesus in your

heart. God does not give you the feeling of it and the consolation, but he gives you something better : the love of him by faith and reliance on his word, and this faith is purer and this love is more substantial than if you had great sensible consolations.

God guides each one in his own way—one one way, and another another. Let him have his own way and it will be best for us, for Jesus loves us all dearly, whether we are sensible of it or not. Let us think of him, study his example, invoke his holy name and call on him for help, and he will never fail us. "Whosoever shall invoke the name of the Lord, the same shall be saved."

But as Jesus the Saviour was also the Christ, the anointed of his Father ; and being God the Creator, the Almighty, the Supreme Majesty, we may be overwhelmed with fear, being so little and insignificant in ourselves. We are reassured and consoled when we hear this name of Jesus. For what does it call to mind ? An Infant lying helpless in the straw at Bethlehem. All this Majesty and Divine Power is concealed. We can approach this helpless Infant, who smiles on us and stretches out his hands. There is no guard as at the door of a palace, but we can walk right in to the open entrance of that stable. We are welcome. The poorest and the feeblest can come in, just as

the simple shepherds who fed their flocks on the mountains.

Later, what do we see when the name of Jesus sounds in our ears? A young lad in a carpenter's shop helping his father, one entirely unknown to the world, spending many years in the performance of simple ordinary duties, to teach us to do, not extraordinary things, but faithfully to do what comes to hand in the ordinary course of that state of life to which God calls us.

Then again, what does the name Jesus recall? The man who went about doing good; most obedient to the will of his Father; submitting gladly to privations; often hungry; having no place to lay his head; scorned and reviled, despised by the rich and powerful—a man of sorrows and disappointments, to teach us to put up with what we cannot help, with what comes to us from the hand of God; to quiet the disturbance of our minds by the only consolation which is real—*i.e.*, acquiescence in the Divine Will.

Lastly, we see Jesus stretched upon the Cross and expiring in a long agony; submitting to death, to teach us to give back to God our lives, when he calls for them. And also to have confidence in Him who was willing to die for us, to redeem us from our sins, and supply for all our shortcomings. Could he give

us a greater proof of the sincerity of his love, and the greatness of it, than to die for us? As Scripture says: "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Let us, then, love our Lord Jesus sincerely; and that we can do most effectually by having, as St. Paul says, in ourselves "the same mind which was also in Christ Jesus." "Who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery himself to be equal to God: but debased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made to the likeness of men and in shape found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God hath exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow of those in heaven and on earth and in hell, and every tongue confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father."

Yes, dear brethren, let us invoke the name of Jesus in all our trials, and practise what that name signifies, and in a short time we shall also be in the glory of God the Father, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, made happy and contented for ever and ever. Amen.

## VISIT OF GOD TO THE SOUL.

*(Third Sunday after Epiphany.)*

Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed.—*Matt. viii. 8.*

THE words have been selected by Holy Church and placed in the mouth of the Priest, just before he receives Holy Communion himself, and again also before he gives it to others. Three times he says, holding the consecrated Host in his hand, “Domine, non sum dignus.” Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only speak the word, and *my soul* shall be healed. He says this three times, speaking not for himself but in your place, showing that you ought not merely to know this sentiment, but to be pervaded and pierced through and through with its holy meaning. As the angel says, Holy, holy, holy three times before the throne of God, so we are to say, I am not worthy, I am not worthy, I am not worthy three times before we receive the Body of our Lord and our God. And this same sentiment is not only in place when we receive Communion, but should be the sum and the substance of all our religion. And this it shall be my endeavor to explain this morning.

“Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst

enter under my roof." What is the meaning of this entering of God under our roof? Among other significations it may have this: God enters under our roof when he visits our souls, when he in some way communicates himself to our souls. When he secretly, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, enlightens us so that we get a glimpse of his Divinity, or a vivid impression of some of the eternal truths. Almost every one of us must have some little experience of this some time in the course of our lives. When some beloved friend or relative to whom we have been inseparably and devotedly attached has been suddenly removed out of this world, then we experienced what I am speaking of. We realized the utter nothingness and vanity of that which we esteemed the *most real* and the most desirable, and in this the utter hollowness and insufficiency of *anything* the world could offer us, and we longed and our heart ached after the real, the true, the substantial, the eternal. Though we perhaps did not know it, we were panting after God, even as the hart, thirsty and tired after a long chase, just ready to drop down from sheer exhaustion, pants and longs to stop and cool its mouth at the water-brook and the cool fountain. Our poor vessel, which we supposed firmly anchored, has in the violence of the storm parted her cables, and goes drifting



about, and we long with an agony of despair for a safe harbor in which no gale can disturb us and where we can repose in perfect security. And what is this longing for peace and for security which nothing can trouble, but the longing for the all-powerful and the all-wise God? Would that we could know and recognize these visitations when they come to us, because then we would turn to God with our whole hearts and souls and strength, and never let him go again; and this transitory visit would become an abiding one, and we should become possessed of God and all the treasures of his infinite joy and happiness. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," exclaims our Lord, "how often would I have gathered together thy children as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings. . . Behold your house shall be left desolate," . . . "because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." But this visit of God to the soul is in pain and distress. It is so hidden, too, that he is hardly recognized. But let us take the faithful soul who has endeavored for a long time to serve God, and who has sought him earnestly among all the circumstances of life and in all things. Who can describe, or who can imagine the delight, the exquisite happiness, the wonderful fervor and purity, which the communication of God produces in such a

soul. We have an example of this in the case of St. Francis of Assisi. Bernard, one of the richest noblemen of the city, saw how St. Francis lived such a poor life, how he despised the world and loved insults and injuries, and he suspected that God must give him extraordinary graces and light in his soul. He determined to find out about it, if he could. Therefore he invited him to supper and had a bed provided for him in his own room, where a light was burning all night. They both retired to rest, and both pretended to be asleep. St. Francis, thinking Bernard fast asleep, arose softly and began to pray. Raising his hands and eyes to heaven, he exclaimed with great devotion and fervor: "My God, my God!" and at the same time he wept constantly; and he remained thus all night and repeated these same words, "My God, my God," and none other. Bernard was so much touched by the expression of his face and the fervor of his exclamations that he sold all he had, gave the money to the poor, and joined St. Francis immediately.

Nor, indeed, does it seem that there is anything strange or wonderful in this. Who is God? The infinite Good, the infinite Wisdom and Beauty, the Fountain of infinite joy and happiness. St. Francis appreciated this Eternal and Infinite Good. He esteemed all the

things of the world as dross and dung in comparison with it. He shut out of his soul the very thought of everything else in order that the thought of God might grow and increase within him, and bent upon God all his love, all his desires, all his hopes, and all his fears. And so God came and took up his dwelling-place in his soul and filled him with joy. And if, dear brethren, we would do the same, even in some degree, the same result would follow; we should enjoy a happiness which we would not exchange for the possession of the whole world.

What we lack generally is that faith which makes us live for God, and realize and penetrate and make our own the eternal truths and the eternal things. If you realized that an immense fortune had been left you, and that you would enter upon its enjoyment next year, your exultation and joy would be excessive at once. You would be so little able to contain yourself that you would run around as soon as possible to tell your friends, that they might congratulate you. Well, in the same way the idea of an unbounded and never-ending good, soon to be entered upon, is enough to fill the soul with rapturous and excessive joy. All other joy, all other riches, are as nothing in comparison. The soul exclaims, with St. Agnes: "Depart from me, thou food of death, for

now I am bespoken by another lover. I am espoused to Him to whom the angels are servants ; at whose beauty even the sun and the moon are astonished. He has adorned my neck and my right hand with precious jewels ; he has placed in my ears pearls of inestimable value. He has shown to me incomparable treasures, which he has promised to give me."

But the soul not only appreciates God, so to speak, in a natural way, by the gradual growth of the Divine Love in it ; but when it is prepared by faithfulness and the exercise of the virtues, God oftentimes visits it in an extraordinary manner ; just as when the wood is prepared and the kindling stuff and the shavings, the spark touches it and the flame blazes out warm and bright. A spiritual writer says, that if we take all the pleasures of the whole earth and melt them down and mix them into one single pleasure, and pour it all upon one single person, his enjoyment would be nothing at all to the joy produced in the soul when Christ communicates himself to her ; for it is God, the pure divinity, which is poured into the soul, so that it is not only full, but running over. Sometimes this superabundance of joy compels one to cry aloud, sometimes to sing, sometimes to seek relief in rapid movement, sometimes by remaining immovable, sunk in a profound silence. Of St. Joseph

of Cupertino it is related that at the sound of music or when a hymn was sung, or something said about God, or even at the very name of Jesus or Mary, he suffered a sudden melting and fainting of soul; and, burned as by an internal fire, he exclaimed: "Ah, love! ah love!" and burst forth into singing. Often he sang a canticle of St. Catherine of Sienna, in which when he came to the words, His hands, his feet, and his heart were wounded by the celestial love, he uttered a loud cry, and his whole body was trembling with violent agitation, and he cried vehemently, "Open for me this breast, pierce this heart of mine"; and when he was asked what he desired most of all in this world he answered: "That God might take my heart wholly to himself." Turning to the crucifix, he was accustomed to say: "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, draw me upwards; I cannot stay longer here below; draw me upwards where thou art."

I do not wish to dilate more upon the wonderful and admirable things God operates and has operated in the souls of many of his servants in every age of the Church up to the present time. He gives them when he will and to whom he will. I have alluded to them simply to show what admirable things are operated in the soul when God visits it. We should desire above all the things which this

world can offer that God should visit us and heal our souls from all their sicknesses. We should not desire that he should do this in an extraordinary or miraculous manner. This would be the height of presumption, and a pride which is very far from that humility which draws God down into the soul.

Remember, it was the humility of the Blessed Virgin which made her, of all the women of the world, the Mother of God. The saints who received visions, revelations, ecstasies, never asked for them, never desired them. They cried out constantly, "Domine, non sum dignus." This is what we should do; we should constantly say: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof. I ask no extraordinary favor. I desire no visions, dreams, revelations, miracles, or anything of the kind. I am utterly unfit to receive such, and they would only make me proud, and perhaps prove my ruin. But, O Lord, speak the word, and my soul shall be healed." To this desire that our souls should be healed of all their wounds, cured of all their defects, we need set no limit. That our Lord should enter under our roof in the way of faith, in a hidden, secret way of Divine grace, and make us entirely his own, and completely like himself—this should be our constant aspiration, desire, and prayer. God will then speak

the word, and we shall be irrevocably, finally his. Who can describe the blessedness and real happiness of such a state? Even if accompanied by trials and afflictions, both inward and outward, it is a state which we would not exchange for all the wealth of the whole world. It is like martyrdom: the best of God's gifts, and the open gate of the celestial kingdom and of eternal joy.

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### SAVE US, WE PERISH.

*(Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.)*

Lord, save us, we perish.—*St. Matt. viii. 25.*

OUR Lord had wrought many miracles, and a great multitude had assembled to hear him. He entered into a fishing boat—called in the Scripture a ship—and taught them until evening. Then he was very weary—for he did not suffer his Divinity to shield him from human weakness and infirmity—and in order to rest he gave word to put off from the shore and cross to the other side of the lake, and at once he went to the hinder part of the vessel, and lying down, fell into a deep sleep. Although as man he slept, the Divinity never sleeps, and arranges all things. And a great storm arose by the Divine will, and the wind blew violently and the water was thrown into

the boat until she was nigh sinking. The disciples who were on board were frightened and ran to wake our Lord, who slept through it all. They cried: "Lord, save us, we perish." Jesus rebuked them: "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith." He commanded the sea, and at once there was complete calm.

We are taught here that, while we are in the grace of God and God's friends, we need not expect to have during our voyage of life always plain sailing and favorable winds, but must look out for storms and be put apparently in dangerous circumstances, so that we must cry out for help. It is true that if we had a strong and lively faith we should never lose our trust in God, who is always with us, ready to help us; and therefore we should not yield to fear, but stand firm. Yet we are weak, and if we are terrified we cannot do better than to cry out, "Lord, save us; we perish."

The disciples were with our Lord; they witnessed his divine power over and over again, and they should have had more confidence, Jesus being right there on board with them, and know that he could keep them, though asleep; and they deserved the reproach of Jesus: "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?" But it was a gentle reprimand, and he immediately commanded the waves and the wind and restored tranquillity.



God willed that that violent storm should arise, strong enough to put them in peril of their lives. And he wills that storms of various sorts should come to put the soul in danger of losing the grace of God and of incurring the second death, the final loss of our supernatural destiny. We are now in the state of probation, or trial, and we must earn our salvation by faithfulness amidst all these trials. As the Scripture says: "Son, when thou comest to the servîce of God stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation; . . . for gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." These temptations or trials are of different kinds. Some are tried in one way and some in another. Life is full of these trials, as most of us know by our own experience. We are going along quietly, in good dispositions. God is with us, and it appears easy enough to persevere; but an accident happens: one is deprived of his sight by it, or rendered a cripple for life. His grief is intense, and the temptation arises. Why has this happened? How have I deserved this treatment? Why should God act in this way towards me? One is tempted to fly in the face of Divine Providence, and refuse to take what God has sent. Another is stricken down by sickness and suffers intensely from fever;

another, in the very flower of youth, finds himself the victim of deadly disease. With a bright mind, a good education, brilliant prospects before him—all is reduced to nothing.

Another great trial is poverty. One is always in straits and does not know where his daily subsistence is to come from. He and his family have hardly the means of living. What is harder yet is, when one has had plenty and has been reduced to want. All this is happening every day, and to great numbers of people. All this is occasion for sin, and we must stand firm in justice and fear.

Still greater trials come through our relatives and friends when they are taken from us, and disappear for ever from our sight in this world. Bereavement makes the world a desert, and we know not where to look for comfort: "Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted because they are not."

The remedy for all these trials is in our faith. Faith teaches us that God is always with us, always ready to help us. Faith teaches us that God's design in all these trials and temptations is for our good; that they are temporary and soon over; that though we cannot see the meaning of them, it is all right; we must trust in God, and that all will be right in the end.

It is true that many of us may be spared

such excessive trials as these, or not have so many of them ; but I say we shall have enough to do in taking such as are sent us. We may have trials of another kind which are dangerous for our salvation. These come from our passions, which draw us from God's grace to gratify them.

One has a propensity to the use of liquor or other stimulants. Another to sins of the flesh. These may have increased influence by having been indulged heretofore, and draw one powerfully to neglect and disobey the law of God in order to indulge them. Whatever such trials may be they must be resisted, or the shipwreck of the soul will ensue.

Besides, we have our daily trials, which come every day and many times a day. A sudden storm of passion arises, by an insult or provoking word ; by a flagrant injustice which may be done us ; by an opportunity to make money by unlawful means ; by the sight or hearing of what is impure and indecent. If we do not resist, and give consent, we shall fall from grace. These things give great fear to a well-meaning soul. And when nothing of this kind happens, the soul may be beset by dreadful temptations within ; by interior trials : trials against faith ; temptations to doubt God's goodness, or the truth of what he has revealed ; temptations to despair, or to

doubt even the existence of God. In all this we must stand in justice and in the fear of God.

God was with the disciples in the same little vessel; and being present, they were perfectly secure. So he is always with us, always ready to help us. He sees us and knows all about us. If he allows these temptations, he adjusts them to our strength. As the Apostle says: "He will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it."

But our Lord was in a deep sleep while all this tempest was going on. We learn much by this. When a temptation comes upon us our passions are aroused and drown reflection. We are carried away by them. Jesus is asleep, but his Divinity is awake and is with us all the time. It suggests to us in a little while: You are in danger; call on God for help, or you will be overcome. We do so. Jesus wakes up; the storm of passion subsides; the danger is over.

Sometimes the alarm and fear exist while the danger does not exist. That is when the will is firmly fixed on God, but the temptation still appears violent. Then God seems not to hear our prayers. We do not feel his influence. He seems not to hear us, or to be concerned about us. We may be a long time

in a state of desolation, apparently abandoned. But it is not so. God is with us all the time; but he hides himself, as it were behind a screen. He sees us, with great love; but we do not see him. Let us take comfort in such circumstances. It is for our greater<sup>1</sup> good. This is the road of pure faith. As our Lord said to St. Thomas: "Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed." Let us be content to grope our way in obscurity and darkness as long as God sees fit that it should be so. He is with us all the time and keeps us. He will make up to us in due time for all this mental suffering, and we shall see that it was exactly adapted to our needs, and the best and most loving thing that could be done.

In all our troubles and misgivings, when we are overwhelmed by trials and fear to lose God, let us go to Jesus and wake him by fervent prayer, saying, "Save us, O Lord; we perish." This will make us humble, patient, and charitable. This will produce calm, and carry us safely through the voyage of life to the secure harbor of heaven.

AGAINST FALSE DOCTRINE.

*(Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.)*

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field; but while men were asleep, his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way.—*St. Matt. xiii. 24, 25.*

OUR Lord Himself explains this parable. He says: "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom, and the cockle are the children of the wicked one; and the enemy that sowed them is the devil."

We all know how it was that the Son of man sowed the good seed in the field of the world. He came down from heaven, and was born into this world a man like ourselves in all respects except sin. He taught us first by his example, remaining in humility and hidden from the world for thirty years. To teach us that there is no end to the patience, and long-suffering, and submission to God's will which we should render to the All-Wise and All-Powerful and All-Good, who directs all things, no matter how they may appear to us, to our real welfare. This example of long-suffering patience our Lord afforded in this long period of thirty years. Then he began to

teach, and make known to us our holy religion, which is the good seed that produces the children of the kingdom.

He gathered around him the twelve Apostles and many other disciples. They went around with him, and witnessed his miracles and his life, and heard all his words. Particularly after his resurrection from the dead he instructed them in the things of the kingdom of God, and solemnly commissioned them to transmit it to all generations: "Going therefore teach all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

So this good seed, the words of eternal life, was sown in the field of the world at first by our Lord himself personally, and afterwards by the Apostles and their successors, and will be until the end of the world, our Lord being with them and guiding them from all error.

Those who accept this teaching of the Holy Catholic Church, which was constituted by this divine command, and who live according to it, are the wheat—the children of the kingdom who shall live with God for all eternity. We who by God's grace are in this Church have this opportunity, which we should prize more than all this world, and more than even life itself; for the things of this world shall

all pass away and be gone, and this life shall shortly end ; but God shall remain, and not a jot or tittle of his word shall pass away.

But our Lord foresaw that many would refuse to believe the doctrines he taught, or else, believing them, would refuse to live according to them. After the good seed was sown in the field an enemy came, whilst men were asleep, and sowed over it the cockle, or weeds. This enemy is the devil, the enemy of the salvation of men. He sows this bad seed whilst men are asleep. When the rulers of the Church become lukewarm and do not watch, false doctrines and neglect of the means of grace grow up. Also when men, in spite of all their warnings and instructions, listen to the voice of their evil passions and indulge themselves in sin, and shut their ears to all God's warnings in their own hearts, or from God's teachers, then the cockle springs up and grows among the wheat, and instead of their being the children of the kingdom they become the children of the wicked one.

We all of us have free will, or the power of choosing between good and evil ; and although in baptism we receive sanctifying grace and original sin is removed, yet concupiscence, or evil propensity, is left in us in order that we may fight a good fight against it and merit the kingdom of heaven. Satan our enemy ex-



cites these evil passions, and thus sows the evil seed. Sometimes he excites pride and vainglory, and thus men arise who bring in heresy and false doctrine. They know better than the Church of God. They reject the Church of which our Lord says: "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me"; that Church that he established himself and promised to stand by until the end of the world—which is called "the pillar and ground of the truth." They set up the Bible, the Word of God, to be interpreted, not by God's Church but by each one as he sees fit; and so we see the natural consequence, the division of those who hold this into innumerable sects.

There was Arius and others in ancient times, who divided Christ, denying either his Divinity or his human nature. And later, as we all know, Luther, who denied the authority of the Church, and by his teaching of justification by faith alone, without repentance or charity, overturned the very foundations of Christian virtue.

And he was followed by many others—Calvin and others. Henry VIII. and Elizabeth seem to have been actuated by the simple love of plunder, pretending reformation in order to possess themselves of the property of the Church and charitable institutions, bringing

poverty and extreme distress on the mass of the people. But this is the least of the evils; for, at the instigation of Satan, the bad seed thus sown has been the ruin of innumerable immortal souls. It has produced an immense crop of the children of the evil one, to keep his company, banished from God's presence for all eternity. My dear brethren, we ought to be very thankful for the great mercy shown us in being members of the true Church of God. The great majority of our fellow-citizens do not enjoy this favor.

The way of salvation is plain and straightforward. All we have to do is to follow it; and we have in the holy teaching of the Church, and in the Sacraments, and in the examples of the saints and the faithful, the means by which it is easy to secure our salvation. If the world and all it contains were given us, it would bear no comparison with what we have. Nothing hinders us from living happy and peaceful lives and reaching our destiny in heaven. It is not so outside the Church. There there is darkness and perplexity. There one has to make his way through all sorts of uncertainty and difficulty. And how uncertain is their lot at last, though of course God's grace is everywhere and may conquer in the end.

There are two kinds of heretics. One is

called *formal*, when one is aware he is wrong and yet, through pride or some other wicked motive, persists in false doctrine; and there is no salvation for him unless he repents and retracts. Another may be what is called a *material* heretic, when he honestly holds a false doctrine, believing it to be true, and is willing and ready to follow the truth when he finds it. Such a one may be excused for his error because it is not wilful.

There is a great difference between those who originate false doctrine, and those who come after them and who have been taught it in childhood. But at any rate false doctrine is not good. It is the truth which makes us free and delivers us from evil. Let us judge no man, for God, who sees the heart, can alone judge without mistake. But let us value our privilege and make the best use of it. For what good will it do us to have the right doctrine if we do not live according to it. It is not enough to be a Catholic and not a heretic, if we do not keep the commandments. The bad seed is not only heresy but immorality of all kinds.

The Scripture says: "They shall come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, . . . but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out."

What does this mean? Why, that many educated and brought up in heresy, by their desire for the truth and their living up to the light they have, have received the grace of salvation; while others, in the full light of the truth, have despised it and bid defiance to God's law, and have been rejected and thrown out of their inheritance.

If our privilege is great and beyond estimation, so also is our responsibility. The good grain sowed in our hearts must be cultivated. The ground of our hearts must be softened and made mellow by prayers and recollection. The weeds around it must be pulled up by obedience to the commandments and the counsels of the Gospel. We must set before us the example of our Blessed Saviour. We must devoutly receive the sacraments. We must promptly throw out all the suggestions of Satan in opposition to our faith, and all such temptations, that the good seed may grow and produce fruit, and more abundantly, that we may at death be gathered into the garner of the Lord, to be with him and share his glory and happiness for all eternity.

## THE SPREAD OF THE FAITH.

*(Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.)*

The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed.—*St. Matt. xiii. 31.*

ABOUT nineteen hundred years ago a wonderful man suddenly appeared. He was about thirty years old. He had not been heard of before, but was living in an obscure village in a province of Palestine called Galilee. His parents were poor people; his father a carpenter. There was no university or college in the place, and no means of getting what is called an education. As far as we know, all the learning he acquired must have been at home. He helped his father at his trade.

But suddenly he appeared before the public as a teacher. He was in appearance like everybody else. He wore a garment, like others, of coarse material; went about barefooted, and never wore a covering on his head. His manner was modest and simple, but dignified and wonderfully impressive, for he spoke with authority. And he created an immense impression, for he accompanied his teaching with astonishing works. At a word he healed all manner of diseases: gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk and the deaf to hear—raised the dead to life. Great multitudes gath-

ered around him. They brought the sick and infirm of all sorts to be healed, and they were healed. They said, "This is certainly the Messiah, predicted and so long expected."

He had gathered around him some disciples, who witnessed these things—poor men, uneducated, mostly fishermen from one neighborhood. One day he asked them: "Whom do men say that I am? And they answered: Some say that thou art John the Baptist, and others Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. But Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answering said: Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering said: Blessed art thou, Simon son of Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say to thee: That thou art Peter (*i.e.*, Rock), and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Afterwards he predicted the spread of this Church in the world in the parable of the mustard-seed. "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown up it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches."

The kingdom of heaven here means the Church on the earth. To all appearances its beginning was very small. Jesus, who wrought the miracles, a little while after was seized and publicly executed, as a common malefactor, between two thieves. They cried out: "If thou be the Son of God show thy power by coming down from the Cross." His teaching was apparently buried out of sight by this public disgrace. His disciples were completely discouraged and scattered, going back to their old trade as fishermen.

But that man was what he said he was, the Son of the living God. His prophecy, preposterous as it looked, was to be exactly fulfilled; and the fulfilment is most astonishing and a very clear proof that he was what he said he was—the Son of the living God.

Think of this. Twelve illiterate, simple men, leaving their fishing boats, to begin teaching the new faith among a people so opposed to them. How were they to set themselves against the rabbis, who had spent their whole lives in study. Yet St. Peter, by simply relating as witness the story of the life and death, and above all of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, converted to the faith five thousand. By their own natural powers and abilities they could hardly have persuaded a single one. But the power of God was with them. They

confirmed what they said by the miracles they wrought. When the people saw the finger of God they had to believe—unless, hardened by sin and by pride, they were willing to withstand God and take the consequences of this rebellion. In a short time a great number were added to the faith. Thus the Divine seed, so small at the outset, began to sprout and to grow. A seed is a wonderful thing; it is a little speck held in the hand, but it has an immense power in it—a principle of life put in it by the Creator of all things. This principle of life causes it to take into itself the substance without and change it into itself, and to increase and unfold itself—which we call growing—until this small seed often becomes an immense tree, according to a fixed law which the Almighty has impressed upon it, so that it becomes exactly what he intended it to be.

God put this Divine power into the preaching of the Apostles, as he does into the seed of a plant or tree, to expand and unfold, gathering up souls all over the earth, in due time to become from this small beginning an institution to fill the earth and to last as long as the world lasts. As he said to the Apostles: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and lo I am with you unto the end of the world."



This little seed germinated and came up above ground among the Jews at Jerusalem. A little after the Apostles scattered over the known world, preaching and making converts among the gentiles—*i.e.*, people of other nations. They had every difficulty in the way. They went among strangers; they were penniless; they had not much skill in arguing; they preached the gospel of self-denial, which was certainly not palatable to people living in the free indulgence of their passions without restraint. They told their simple story. The Holy Ghost gave power to their words. They wrought miracles to confirm their doctrine, and they conquered. The civil authorities rose against them. They were scourged and whipped. They were tormented, and at last were killed. They were reviled and all sorts of false stories circulated about them. Human efforts under such circumstances would have completely failed; but the Divine Power nothing can withstand, and so the Church increased daily, and after some three hundred years conquered the Roman Empire and became a great tree. At first it was made up almost wholly of the humble, the poor, the uneducated, but now the learned, the rich, the powerful came in, so that our Lord said the birds of the air alighted in its branches.

According to another parable, the leaven of

the gospel was thus hidden in three measures of meal—*i.e.*, in three quarters of the globe, Europe, Asia, and Africa—and was to spread until the whole earth was to be leavened. And we find that zealous apostles of the faith went out from Rome to evangelize the northern barbarous nations: St. Augustine to the Saxons, St. Patrick to Ireland, and Sts. Cyril and Methodius to the Slavonic nations.

From Ireland zealous missionaries spread themselves over the continent of Europe and brought whole countries to the faith. God in his providence has not seen fit to convert the whole world to the faith; a great part of this work remains still. But his Church has already assumed mighty proportions, and, in spite of all troubles and set-backs—all predicted by our Lord—is on its way to its allotted end.

But we are among the favored ones who have received the faith—a gift from God greater than if we possessed the whole earth. Yes, the very poorest Catholic, if he reflects a moment, must acknowledge that he is richer than the proudest millionaire, and has a condition which is infinitely preferable to his, if he has not the faith, and mostly even if he has it. For he is more like Christ, who was humble and poor; has an easier task to save his soul, and will most likely be far richer in heaven

—where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

Let your treasure be in heaven, and your heart will be where your treasure is. Do not be satisfied with the name of Catholic, but be one in soul and reality. When you appear before the tribunal of Christ at the last judgment, do not be among the number of those who say: Have we not had the faith? have we not been to Mass from time to time, and even occasionally received the sacraments? have we not had some good intentions? and the Lord reply: I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. Oh! no; let us be good Catholics, keepers of God's commandments, living up to the spirit of our religion. Then we shall hear other words: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Amen.

## Sundays before Lent.

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### HIRING LABORERS FOR THE VINEYARD.

(*Septuagesima Sunday.*)

The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And having agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.—*St. Matt. xx. 1, 2.*

THE householder here spoken of is God in heaven. His family is all mankind. He created us all. We are created to his own image and likeness; and we are the only living creatures who are thus created. We are created to work in his vineyard; that is, to live on this earth our allotted time and work for God—*i.e.*, obey him and keep his commandments. God has all things; we can give him nothing except our hearts—*i.e.*, our good will—and when we do this, living as he wishes us to live, then we work in his vineyard; and he agrees with us that he will reward us for it when this life is over by taking us to heaven to be happy with him for ever. This is a bargain he makes with us, and he will fulfil it; we need not be anxious about

that. We are hired for the day—for this life, compared to the eternal life, is only a day, and less than a day; at the longest it is soon over. If we lived to be a hundred, it would seem to us when we looked back as if it were only a day.

What a wonderful opportunity is thus offered to us to gain a reward so great that the human mind cannot grasp it or get the least idea of it, at so little cost, on such easy conditions. What ought we to say? Lord, I accept this bargain with my whole heart, and with great gratitude. I know you will fulfil your part of it, and I will fulfil mine. As long as I live I mean to obey you and faithfully keep your commandments. I know I cannot do this without your help; but you are always ready to help me, and I shall make it my business to call on you for that help every day and every hour. Thus I have confidence that I shall never abandon your vineyard, but be found working in it when the day—that is, my life—comes to an end, and that I shall receive my wages—that is, eternal life. I mean to keep a grateful heart for so great a favor, and praise and glorify thy name as long as I live.

The Householder goes out to hire the laborers at all hours of the day. Early in the morning he receives the little infants in bap-

tism, and if they die before they reach the age of reason he takes them to himself. They have no labor, and for their natural sufferings he gives them, out of pure generosity, the entrance to his kingdom. When they reach the age of reason we may call it the third hour. He invites them into his vineyard; he does that through their parents and their teachers. They learn about God, about our Lord Jesus Christ, about heaven and hell, and what God wants of them. This is the best time to enter the vineyard; early impressions take the deepest hold. The child that learns these truths is not apt to forget them, and has much to bring him back if he should go astray. What a responsibility this puts on parents! If they really love their children, they will not neglect their duty to them. If they do neglect it, then I say they do not really love their children. They love themselves selfishly, and do not care what becomes of their children. Hard-hearted, wicked parents! God will hold them to a strict account and punish them severely.

Those who go into the vineyard at an early age have an immense advantage. Their minds not being contaminated by sin, they are spared many temptations. Taking pleasure in divine things, the appetite for the pleasures of the world, which lead to sin, is deadened. Their

lives are tranquil and happy, and they are loved for their kindness and virtues by all who become acquainted with them; and they have a reward in heaven proportionate to all they have done for God here.

The Lord goes out also at the sixth hour. This may be called the time of youth—the time between childhood and manhood. This is also a favorable time, and happy is the one who embraces the opportunity. One is then full of life and vigor; what he does he does with enthusiasm. If he embraces the service of God, he is apt to do it with his whole heart. But it is also a dangerous time. The passions are then the strongest; one is thoughtless. Life stretches out before one and, appears to have no end. The pleasures of the world appear very alluring. Alas! I am sorry to say too many are carried away by them. What a miserable sight it is to see a young man or young woman given up to dissipation and to sin; a soul with the innocence of an angel become the den of vice and the habitation of the devil! What misery young people are laying up for themselves—a misery which will be upon them before they know it. Then they stand idle—destitute of Good—and when called upon to repent and to begin to do something for their souls, turn away, go on hardening themselves in sin.

What can we say to them? Do not lose any more time. Turn away from your evil courses and make your peace with God, who now calls on you to begin again to work in his vineyard.

The Householder also goes out to hire the laborers at the sixth and the ninth hours. This represents the middle age, from complete manhood to old age: the busy time of life, the time when men are in active worldly employment; when they are settled in life and mostly have families to look after; also the time when most people drop one after another into the grave. It is a great pity to be standing at that age in the market-place idle, because the risk of final loss is so much greater. Perhaps they have been called many times before into the vineyard, and have gone in and afterwards deserted it. And every time they have gone out of it renders it less likely that they will be found in it when the time of the payment of the wages comes—that is, at death, when the time of trial is ended and the last account given. And now God calls again, and with a loud call; maybe with the death of some near relative: a wife or husband, a child in whom the soul is wrapt up; a bereavement which desolates the soul and compels it to go to God for consolation; or something which alarms and strikes terror, such as the sudden and unprovided death of a companion; or it



may be some disease or affliction which makes him face his approaching end, or the word of God which strikes his ears. God has his own ways of inviting us. It is our part to give heed. Remember it is now the sixth, even the ninth hour. The sun is declining; it will soon go down, and the darkness will set in—the eternal night which will never end. The door will be shut, and when we knock for admittance we shall hear the words: “Begone from me, ye workers of iniquity. I know you not.” Now is the time to put oil in your lamps and to trim them, so as to be ready when the Bridegroom comes, at the dead of the night, to enter in with him into the eternal banquet, never more to be shut out.

And our Lord goes out also to hire his laborers even at the eleventh hour—that is, his grace is ready for us even in extreme old age, as long as life is in the body. Is it possible that people with one foot in the grave can still be out of the Lord’s vineyard—without God and without hope in eternity? One would think that their situation would compel them to turn away from the world and all its petty affairs and seek the only thing worth having—*i.e.*, the God who has created them, who alone can satisfy them. This world has already dropped away from them to a great extent. They have lost the sight of the eyes;

they have become enfeebled in body ; the memory is gone to a great extent ; most of their friends and companions have left this world, and they cannot but see that their turn will soon come. And God calls them ; it is the last call. It ought to be their consolation to work in the vineyard the little time left : to say their prayers, to think on God and on Jesus Christ ; to make up for lost time by devoting themselves to pious exercises. Great is the goodness of God which calls us even to our last hour.

And now when the day is over, when we have all turned again to dust, the laborers are all called to receive their agreed-upon wages. There is no more work to be done. They have borne the heat and burden of the day, and now it is rest, a complete, absolute rest. No longer any bodily fatigue and no mental anxiety ; no apprehension or dread in regard to the future ; no lack of anything one desires, but complete satisfaction. The omnipotence of God is at their service to make them happy. This wages of eternal life is given to all without exception, as the parable says. Over and above this, different degrees of glory and happiness according to the merits of each one. But there will be no jealousy or ill feeling. The happiness of each one will be the happiness of all. We shall rejoice in

it as if it were our own. Blessed be God for his goodness and his generosity ! Why cannot we all enter heart and soul into his service, and find our joy and delight, even in this world, in doing God's will, in little things as well as great ; for in little things we show we are in earnest, and honor God more, perhaps, than in what appears greater ? May God grant us this grace ! Amen.

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## VITAL POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD.

(*Sexagesima Sunday.*)

The seed is the word of God.—*St. Luke viii. 11.*

AN apt illustration. The seed of a plant or tree is wonderful. It is very small, like a pin's head ; but it has a wonderful power—a principle of life ; put in the ground, it gathers moisture, swells, expands, takes nourishment from the soil, grows, produces leaves, flowers, and at last fruits—each seed according to its kind. It is a wonderful instance of the Divine Power.

The Word of God is like the seed. It has a principle of life. It is planted in the mind of the hearer. It is heard : makes an impression which appears small, perhaps is routed and driven out for the time ; but it has power :

it comes back to us, it forces its way, it grows and expands ; it influences our lives ; produces a line of conduct suitable to its importance ; is calculated to rule and govern our whole lives, turning us away from evil and towards good, until it is a mighty power which rules and conquers all adverse influences.

The Word of God, says our Lord, "is living and effectual, and sharper than a two-edged sword, which cuts its way through all obstacles. My word is spirit and life. My word shall not pass away. Earth and heaven may pass away, but my word shall not pass away. Man liveth not by bread alone, but by the Word of God."

What is it that gives this mighty life and power to the Word of God? It is its own importance. Every creature seeks its own good. The Creator has implanted in us this instinct. We see it in the plants seeking the moisture of the earth, and in the animals in their search for food and shelter. But this good is only for the moment ; it passes away because they have no reason, only an instinct.

We all seek what we consider our good ; not merely the pleasure of the moment, but a more permanent good. We look to the future and often neglect the present.

The farmer toils to raise his crops. The knowledge of the times and seasons and modes

of farming is a seed in his mind which grows and determines his actions.

So for the merchant. The ways of trade, buying and selling in all the details, and the importance of attending to them, is a principle of action with him. I may say in all the affairs of human life, the end in view, the securing a competence, the making of a fortune, is a seed which expands and grows into a mighty tree. We see this every day—people absorbed and taken up with the thought of worldly prosperity.

But alas! all this our own right reason tells us is a delusion and a snare. When we think about it we are obliged to say to ourselves, all this is bound to come to an end. Sooner than we think it will all be over. All worldly grandeur and all worldly pleasure have short limits. All I have to look for, if I make these things my end, is bitter disappointment. Do we not see examples of it every day? The rich with their millions grow old and decrepit, and go off like the clouds which pass over the sky.

We were created for something better. Our real good is imperishable. We are immortal. Every reasonable being who will stop to think must agree to this. Different from the beasts that perish, we have reason and an inextinguishable thirst for immortal happiness. We

are in God's image and likeness, and we have a right to expect that this image and likeness will be perfected and be brought into a more suitable condition of happiness than this miserable world we are in now, affords.

How we long to know more about it!—to have a definite, clear knowledge of the truth of what we suspect. All other knowledge is chaff and empty in comparison. There is nothing in it. Oh! why does not the power that created us let us know all about it? Why we are here, what is to become of us, what we are to do. Surely he will do so.

Well, all this has been made known to us. God sent his only begotten Son, from all eternity, to give us this information.

God loves us all. He desires the salvation of all. "I have come to send fire on the earth—the fire of Divine Love; and what do I desire but that it shall be kindled?"

But when the seed is sown it must be cultivated and taken care of. If the soil is dry, it must be watered; if it is poor and barren, it must be enriched; if too hard, it must be loosened and broken up; and after it has taken root it must be watched, stirred up, and the weeds which would choke it must be pulled out.

So the Word of God made known to us must be cared for. We must make it the business

of our lives to cultivate it. Our Lord describes how this good seed is neglected and perishes. He says some of the seed fell on a rock, and presently withered away. Others by the wayside, and were trampled down or devoured by the birds. Other portions were choked by the weeds, or cares of this life.

Now, we must not deceive ourselves by these comparisons and excuse ourselves for our own neglect, saying that we could not help it. Each one, no doubt, has his particular difficulties to overcome, and must make especial efforts to correct his faults; but he can do this if he will, and God is always ready to help him.

Suppose he is quick to be moved, and as quick to forget it. He must correct this by prayer and attention. He must continue his efforts until he overcomes this lightness of disposition.

In the same way if he is inclined to give way to temptation and to gratify his evil passions, and yield to the suggestions of the evil one, he must implore the grace of God to resist. As St. James says: "If one is tempted, let him pray, and God will temper the temptation and make a way of escape, so that he does not yield."

If he finds that the world is getting hold of him by its cares and business, he must shake

himself loose from this influence by reflection and prayer.

The seed gathers nourishment all around from the soil, and gets stronger and stronger; so it must be with the Word of God, the Divine seed.

1st. It must be the subject of our constant thoughts, it must become a second nature to us to think of it.

2d. All the events of our lives must be looked at as sources of growth of this seed: either as opportunities of good or as occasions of merit, by avoiding sin and what is contrary to the spirit of the gospel.

How many such occasions occur every day! It must be watered by habits of prayer; by watchfulness. Then it will grow strong and become a mighty tree. Its fruits are all the virtues—chastity, brotherly charity, patience, meekness, and forgiveness of injuries. And the true charity of God, which shall never fail, will unite us to God and make us sharers of his happiness for all eternity.



VALUE OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS  
LIFE.*(Quinquagesima Sunday.)*

And Jesus took unto him the twelve, and said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man. For he shall be delivered to the gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon: and after they have scourged him, they will put him to death, and the third day he shall rise again.—*St. Luke xviii. 31-33.*

THIS world is a place of trial. No one can doubt of it: the newspapers of each day are filled with accounts of murders and robberies, of all sorts of accidents, shipwrecks and drownings; of others burned to death in fires; of bloody wars where thousands are mowed down by their fellow-men; of famines and pestilences which devastate whole countries. A long list, besides, of men around us are dying, in the ordinary course of nature, of old age, or of different diseases, and so severed for good and all from all they are accustomed to and from all that they are attached to and interested in, in this world.

Altogether we may call this world, in the language of the *Salve Regina*, "a valley of tears." I may say no one escapes. If we live long enough, sorrow is sure to overtake us. Riches, honors, pleasures cannot guaran-

tee our happiness. A thousand annoyances beset us under the most favorable circumstances—nothing can ward them off.

What remedy is there for them? Only one—Religion. Religion is the only thing which gives us the explanation of this state of things. Religion is the only thing which tells us what to do. Religion is that holy instruction which teaches us that God is the Sovereign Ruler; that it is he who has ordered all things, and in his supreme wisdom ordered them well and for the best. We must submit and conform ourselves to this order or make ourselves a thousand times more miserable in this life, and fail to find a remedy for our misery. If we submit and conform ourselves to it, we shall be enabled to bear all with patience and even with an inward gladness, knowing that all our trials shall be shortly ended and that we shall be recompensed amply, up to the brim, with happiness which shall know no end.

Such being the case, we can easily understand why our Lord, who was God from all eternity, came down from heaven and took our flesh upon himself and passed through thirty-three years upon this earth. It was to be an example to us.

We cannot comprehend God; his greatness is beyond all our understanding. We

have only to look around us to see this. When we see what God has created we are confounded, we are stunned, we are overwhelmed at the sight of his power and his wisdom. But his goodness, his magnanimity, his generosity, his love are equal to his power and his wisdom.

This is certified to us by the teaching and by the life of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world. As when the sun shines a man casts his shadow on the ground, so the manhood of Jesus, with its kindness and gentleness and love, is the shadow of the Divinity and shows us the love of God towards us.

Now we can understand a little why Christ came into the world, not only to redeem us but to be a pattern and example to us for our whole lives. He says: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, that all things shall be accomplished which were spoken by the prophets concerning the Son of man: that he should be delivered to the gentiles, mocked, scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged him he shall be put to death, but on the third day he shall rise again.

He went up to Jerusalem willingly, of his own accord. No one compelled him. God put it upon him. That was enough. The will of God was his will and his choice. He went to meet the greatest suffering it is possi-

ble for a man to suffer, to be in all things an example to us.

If a man is taken down with a raging fever which causes him intense suffering, it is God who sends it. He must bear it; he has no choice. If he is a Christian he has Christ for an example, who suffered much more before and while he hung upon the cross. Remembering this, and praying for help, he does not blaspheme, he does not murmur; or if he does, it is not voluntary, but extorted from him by pain. He asks pardon, and is at once forgiven. He asks for patience, and bears his suffering as a Christian should, with inward consolation.

If he loses his property, and even is in need of the necessities of life, he thinks of Him who lived on alms and had a stone for a pillow, and he bears it with resignation. He can even face death, as thousands of martyrs have done when God has so ordered it; and in its most frightful shapes—decapitation, burning alive, slow starvation, mutilation of limbs, etc. Sustained by Divine Grace, always ready to help us in such trials, they laughed at these torments. The example of Christ expiring on the cross was sufficient.

• Besides bodily sufferings, Christ says he goes up to Jerusalem to be mocked, scourged, and spit upon. What man on the face of the

earth ever suffered greater indignities? The Creator of the universe is delivered over to vile, brutal soldiers, who buffet him, strike him in the face—an insult which causes the fiercest indignation. They mock him, putting old rags upon him for a royal robe, and a crown of thorns beaten down upon his head—and then pretend to kneel before him—striking him violently, calling him vile names, and—must I say it?—spitting in his face. What vilest criminal, dragged along the streets by a howling mob, was ever treated worse?

And why? To teach us our proper place; to make us remember that we are creatures, that we have nothing of our own; that we must not exalt ourselves above our Maker, but obey and honor him; that we must not be proud and despise others; nor think ourselves better than they, but remember what Christ said: Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. How many defects we have and how much to be ashamed of; and yet we cannot bear that any one shall reprove us, or even notice them.

How unforgiving we are if even the least slight is put upon us. We are too proud to acknowledge our faults or to do penance for them. The Lord puts down the mighty from their seats and exalts the humble.

Were we humble (which is only to be truth-

ful and not liars) we should have no trouble in accepting the Gospel ; no trouble, but delight, in living up to its maxims.

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem. Who go up there? Our Lord and his disciples : they go that all may be accomplished. We are his disciples ; let us go there with our Lord and Master. How shall we go there? By observing properly the holy season of Lent.

Our Mother the Church sets apart a certain part of the year to think over and reflect on what Christ has done and suffered for us. She directs us to withdraw for awhile from the frivolities, the amusements, the occupations of the world, that we may think of the eternal things which await us when all these things have passed away and are gone.

Next Wednesday we are invited to enter the city of Jerusalem when the ashes are put upon our foreheads, and we hear the words : "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return."

The old man just ready to depart and the little infant alike have the sign of the cross imprinted upon them. No one knows which will first return to the dust, but in a short time both will have done so. What is even a hundred years compared to the long outstretching, illimitable eternity?

In the season of Lent we go up with our

Lord, that things prophesied of him may be accomplished. We go over his life and his sufferings and death in our minds.

To do this well we should attend the services of Lent; besides the Sundays, the evening services on Wednesdays and Fridays—the sermons on Wednesdays and the Way of the Cross on Fridays. If you are in mortal sin, be sorry, repent, examine yourself and make a good confession, with, above all, a firm determination to quit sin and keep all the commandments.

Thus you will be restored to God's favor, and also acquire a solid peace of mind—that peace which you had not before, and which the whole world and all in it cannot give you. If you are afraid that God will not forgive you, look at Christ nailed to the cross and be convinced that he is only too desirous to do it.

If already in God's grace—by earnestness and prayers and suitable self-denial—confirm and strengthen yourselves, and with St. Paul you will be able to say: "Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God."

May you spend this Lent in such a way that all this may be accomplished, and you may at last reach the Heavenly Jerusalem—our true home with God in heaven.

## Sundays in Lent.

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### TEMPTATION NECESSARY BUT PROFITABLE.

(*First Sunday in Lent.*)

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil.—*St. Matt. iv. 1.*

THIS was immediately after his baptism in the Jordan, when the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and rested upon him, and the words were heard: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He was impelled by the Holy Ghost to go into the desert to be tempted. But we may ask *why* was our Lord tempted? He was sinless, he was God as well as man, there was no conflict in him between the flesh and the spirit, because in all things perfect, his human nature was completely pure and had nothing in it to lead to sin, and nothing for temptation to take hold of.

He was tempted for our sakes, that he might taste of all that belongs to our nature except sin, and share in our infirmities and troubles and difficulties; to assure us that he understands by experience what our contest is with the powers of darkness and temptation,



and that he is most willing to hear our prayers and help us.

A great prize is offered us : no less than exemption for ever from all evil—from pain, from trouble of all kinds ; and also boundless happiness—the gratification of every wish, complete satisfaction and joy, on easy conditions which we can fulfil if we wish, but which also require exertion and faithfulness on our part. We must keep the commandments of God, and thus honor and love him. And this is the business of our lives ; every other business must be in subjection to this, and this must be observed in spite of everything that opposes or stands in the way.

From this we can see that temptation must be ; it necessarily exists. There must be a conflict between our passions and inclinations and the spirit—between the spirit and the flesh. There is the law of God on one side, and our nature on the other. Thou shalt not commit murder on one side, and the passion of anger, revenge, and avarice on the other. Thou shalt not commit adultery—which forbids all lust and impure actions and sinful desires—on one side, and strong natural instinct and desire on the other. Thou shalt not steal—forbidding robbery, bribery, cheating—on one side, and covetousness and desire for money, the root of all evil, as money represents all kinds of

worldly satisfaction, on the other. Pride and vainglory—which arrogate all to ourselves, make us despise God and rebel against him—on one side, and the obligation to honour, serve, and love God on the other. Man could not exist without temptation. And God has made it so for very good reasons: without temptation where would be the merit?

If we could do just what we pleased without any opposition, how could we show our faithfulness to God? We should be like the animals, or like the sticks and the stones. We should have no free will and no power of choice. Without an enemy, how could we be the soldiers of Christ? Without a battle, how could there be a victory. It is God's will that we should suffer temptation in order that we may resist and not yield, and thus show ourselves worthy.

"Son," says the sacred writer, "when thou comest to the service of God . . . prepare thy soul for temptation, . . . for gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." Again: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish according to his good will." Again: "Count it all joy when you shall fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith

worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work; that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing."

Our Lord, then, was tempted to show us the way: that it might not be said or thought that he exempted himself from our trials; that he might teach us how to meet these temptations successfully and overcome them; and point out the reward of victory when we resist them.

The temptation of our Lord was threefold: 1st. In regard to the body. He was led by the Spirit into the desert, and fasted forty days and forty nights, and was afterwards a-hungered. Then the devil came to him and said: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Hunger causes great pain and the craving for food is very urgent. Satan knew this, and hoped to ascertain whether he was the Son of God by his answer. He hoped in vain. Our Lord replied: "It is written: not in bread alone does man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God." It was not suitable to work a miracle when his wants could be provided for in another way. Our Lord suffered all the inconveniences of life without working any miracle for his own comfort or benefit. When tempted by gluttony or impurity, we must cry out to God to help us,

and not listen to the suggestions of the flesh or of Satan, our infernal enemy.

This represents the temptations of the flesh ; and Satan failing in this, and not ascertaining whether our Lord was the Son of God or not, proceeded to the next one. He took him up and placed him upon a pinnacle of the Temple at Jerusalem—that is, on the highest platform of the Temple, and said : “ If thou be the Son of God cast thyself down, for it is written that he has given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone.” This was the temptation to vainglory, to appear great in the sight of men and be praised and admired—a thing which makes us forget God, and makes us despise him and disobey him ; a thing which, alas ! we are very apt to desire. Our Lord replied : “ Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” The thing suggested was a foolish thing and unfit to do, and the answer simply stated it. Satan was deceived, and thought he could not be the Son of God, but only a man ; and therefore proceeded to the third temptation. Again : the devil took him up into a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them, and saith to him : “ All these I will give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me.” What a foolish tempta-

tion of the devil! He lied, for he owned nothing of them. Yet it is a bait of this kind he uses to catch so many souls. What a pity it is that so many yield to this lying temptation. The devil says, If you only have plenty of money you will be well off; you will need nothing else. Get it any way you can, by fair means or foul. What is this but saying, Fall down and worship me, and I will give it to you. Alas! the poor deceived fools will soon regret their bargain, for money will not buy exemption from death. And death robs us of all our earthly goods. As Scripture says, we brought nothing into this world, and we can carry nothing out. Our Lord simply replied: "Begone, Satan; for it is written, The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and him only shalt thou serve."

This was the end of the temptation, and this answer tells us the best way of meeting temptations of all kinds. If we are fully persuaded that the Lord our God is our Lord and God, and will adore him and serve him, temptations will have little hold of us. Do not let pleasure be our God. Do not let us live like the brute beasts, who have no reason, for the gratification of our appetites, but adore God and acknowledge him to be our Lord. Do not let honors and riches be our God, and we be their slaves, but honor the God of heaven

and earth, who created us and from whom we get every breath we draw. Let us love God by the homage of our soul, by appreciating what he is, the perfect one, the infinite one, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise, and the All-Good, and render him his due—our obedience, our reverence, and our love. If we cannot do it in feeling (and our feelings are not in our power), do it in good will, and God will accept our good will; it will please him more than feeling, and thus temptation will have no power.

The thought of God should be habitual with us, so that when the evil suggestion presents itself, the thought of God will also present itself and drive the bad thought out. This is equivalent to saying that prayer is the remedy for temptation, for a good life is the same thing as a life of prayer.

Prayer is a helmet, a shield, a buckler to defend you from all the attacks of your enemy. Form habits of prayer and you are safe. Therefore be sure to offer prayers every morning when you rise and every night when you retire, and from time to time short ejaculatory prayers during the day, and Sundays at Mass, so as to get this habit. Of ourselves, by our own strength, we cannot resist; the power must come from God's grace, and that is obtained without fail by prayer.

But in the Lord's Prayer we say, "Lead us not into temptation." Although temptation must come, it must come by God's permission, and we must not seek it; and we must dread it and be afraid of it. Flee from sin. Flee from the occasions of it. He that loveth the danger will perish in it. Flee from all evil resorts, from the bar and the saloon. Go not to dens of iniquity. If we go to such places, we defy God, we mock him, we cast him aside. Avoid evil companionships; evil communications corrupt good manners. No man can serve two masters. If you serve Satan, you will despise and hate God. If you serve God, Satan will have no power over you. Temptation then will cease and angels will come and minister to you.

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## THE THOUGHT OF HEAVEN STRENGTHENS US IN AFFLICTIONS.

*(Second Sunday in Lent.)*

And after six days, Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart. And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow.—*St. Matt. xvii. 1, 2.*

OUR Lord predicted this transfiguration six days before it occurred. He was speaking to his disciples of his coming sufferings; of being

delivered to the gentiles to undergo all that the prophets had predicted ; to be put to death, and then to rise on the third day.

Peter could not bear to hear this, and taking him aside, said : " Lord, be it far from thee. This shall not be unto thee." Our Lord reproved him sharply : " Go behind me, Satan ; thou art a scandal unto me ; because thou savorest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men ! " Then Jesus said to his disciples : " If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For he that will save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. . . For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels : and then will he render to every man according to his works. Amen I say to you, there are some of them that stand here that shall not taste death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom,"

This was the promise of what took place six days after, when he took Peter and James and John and was transfigured before them, his face shining like the sun and his garments white as the snow.

From this we see the reason why our Lord exhibited his glory in the transfiguration. He contrasts the life of suffering here with the



glory that awaits us. He explains that in order, to gain eternal life we must be willing to undergo all that God sends, even to giving up our life and suffering martyrdom if God so ordains it. And to encourage us he sets forth the glory of heaven. The Son of man shall come in his glory with the angels and render to each man according to his works. And he would make this apparent to his chosen Apostles even in this life, to make an impression upon them which they could never forget, and which in the severest trials would give them the courage to endure them with patience, and even joy; and serve the same purpose with us in our trials, when by faith we reflect on this appearance and on what it signifies. The three Apostles had a life of immense suffering before them. They had to drink deep of the same cup that our Lord did. St. Peter was, as we know, imprisoned; scourged over and over again; lived in privation, and was finally crucified at Rome. St. James was cruelly martyred at Jerusalem. St. John, the beloved disciple, was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, and only escaped by a miracle. To strengthen them this glorious vision of our Lord was shown them. Christ appeared to them on Mount Thabor, all glorious; and accompanying him were Moses and Elias—Moses, the leader of the chosen peo-

ple, who had a glimpse of the glory of the Almighty on the burning mountain; and Elias, who was taken up alive in the fiery chariot. Saints of the Old Testament joined those of the New: Moses, who led the Israelites from Egypt, and Peter, who was appointed to be the vicar of Christ and the leader of the Church; Elias together with St. James, the Christian martyr.

St. Peter, entranced with this splendid vision and hardly knowing what he did, said: "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

He had never seen Moses nor Elias, but he knew them as we shall know them when we see them in heaven. As he was speaking a bright cloud overshadowed them and a voice was heard saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him"—a proof of our Lord's Divinity; as much as saying: Behold my Son from all eternity, the Creator of the universe, equal to myself in all things. The Apostles fell flat on their faces. Our Lord touched them and raised them up, saying, Fear not; and tell not of this vision until the Son of man is raised from the dead.

It is evident that this vision made the deep-

est impression on St. Peter, for he speaks of it years after in his epistle: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but having been made eye-witnesses of his majesty, for he received from God the Father honor and glory, that voice coming down to him from the excellent glory: This is my beloved Son, in whom I have pleased myself; hear ye him. And this voice we heard brought from heaven when we were with him in the holy mount."

Our Lord constantly sets before us the reward which awaits us if we love him and keep his commandments. He knows our weakness. He knows of what we are made, and that we need this encouragement. Therefore he says: "Let not your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions. If not, I would have told you, that I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am you also may be." And again: "Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven." And so St. Paul says: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that

shall be revealed in us." And again: "For that which is at present momentary and light, of our tribulation worketh for us, above measure, exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."

But some one may say: "We ought to love God for his own sake without any regard to our own good; if we do not, our love is selfish." This sounds well, but it is not true. God has made us as we are. He has put in our minds the instinct to desire our own good and happiness. We would not be human if we did not. But we must not seek a lower and inferior good in place of a higher. God is our supreme and highest good. In seeking him we fulfil our destiny; and to love God, because he is our good as well as the Supreme Good, will help us to love him all the more. We can rejoice exceedingly, because we can be united to this Supreme Good, and in a bond of union which shall never be dissolved.

Now, how shall we apply this to ourselves? We are seldom called on, like the Apostles, to endure martyrdom. Our lives flow along, as a general thing, in a quiet and gentle stream. We may have now and then severe trials, such as sickness coming unexpectedly upon us; or some permanent infirmity which causes us constant uneasiness we would gladly be rid of; or we may experience bereavements which will leave a sting of sorrow as long as we live;

or some other great trial. But as a general thing we may say our trials are ordinary and small; yet they are so numerous and constant that they try us severely, and require all our fortitude to endure them. Unless we are faithful, we may fall from bad to worse; temptations of all kinds surround us: temptations to excess in food and drink—especially the latter, when the mind, being off its balance, is likely to fall into the greatest irregularities. How many examples we have of the best being gradually brought down and made victims of this degrading vice! Then temptations against the virtue of holy purity, brought on often by former excesses, and also brought on, in the ordinary course of life, by our own disorderly passions. To withstand these various temptations requires strong resolution and constant vigilance. Let him that thinketh that he standeth take heed lest he fall. The hope of everlasting life and reflection on the unbounded happiness of the saints in heaven will be a powerful means of perseverance. When one is in sin, and especially in the habit of sin, the fear of God and of the punishment threatened for those who persist in sin, may be more effectual. As Scripture says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” The thought of our perilous state may arouse us to penance, but the

thought of heaven and its loss may be more effectual, as it is a higher and a nobler motive, and leads more quickly to the love of God. The thought of the glory that awaits us is a strong motive to persevere in God's grace. It will enable us to overcome our daily enemies—our sloth, through which we neglect our duties; make us alive to attend to them all, and rejoice to overcome any obstacle in the way. It will enable us to overcome anger, to keep calm under irritating circumstances; never for a moment to consent to thoughts of hatred and revenge, but freely forgive as we expect forgiveness. To restrain impatience when the hand of God falls on us—knowing that patience has a perfect work and will bring us safe into the harbor of safety.

When we see Jesus thus transfigured and glorified we may and will exclaim: It is good for us to be here; here we will dwell, until we see him in heaven to dwell with him for ever. Amen.

## THE DUMB DEVIL.

*(Third Sunday in Lent.)*

And he was casting out a devil, and the same was dumb; and when he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke: and the multitude were in admiration at it.—*St. Luke xi. 14.*

THE man who was possessed of the devil and who was dumb represents one in mortal sin.

Such a one is possessed of the devil. Not that the devil has possession of him completely, so that he appears outwardly demented, or that the devil controls his bodily organs, making him do strange, unaccountable things; but he has possession of his soul, making him turn away from God and do what he suggests to him. Such a one acts not according to his right reason, but according to the voice of his passions, at the instigation of the devil. The devil puts before him the allurements of pleasure. The man knows full well that this is leading him on to final ruin. He hears sounding in his ears the command: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor; thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal. He knows the justice of God will overtake him if he does these things, but still he does them. He is in the devil's power. He is led around by

the devil, in a certain sense against his will as it is not altogether pleasant ; but he is led all the same. So we may say of the one in mortal sin, especially if in the habit of mortal sin, that he is possessed of the devil. He is not his own master, but the devil has him chained and leads him around wherever he wills.

He may flatter himself that he is a free man and can do as he chooses, but he really knows better ; for when he is tempted he cannot resist. He knows this by long experience. His will is so much weakened by indulgence in sin that it makes little or no resistance. He has become a slave of the devil, and has to do just what his master orders him. The only remedy for him is to have this devil cast out : to heed the voice of Christ speaking within him in his heart, and asking fervently and persistently for his cure. Then his prayer will be heard and this horrible demon of mortal sin will be cast out.

And the devil who possesses the one in mortal sin makes him dumb, paralyzes his tongue so that he cannot speak. He can speak fast enough that which is sinful and wicked, but is dumb in all that is good. He is at liberty to blaspheme, to curse or to swear ; he is able to speak scurrility and indecency ; to talk where money-making, bribery, or cheating is concerned, but dumb to



everything spiritual. In regard to God he is dumb. He has nothing to say about him, and nothing to say to him.

God should be the object of his adoration and love. He is the glorious Creator of the universe and our Creator. He has given us all we have. He preserves us in life every instant. When everything earthly passes away he remains, and is just as near to us as ever. He is our Father a thousand times more than our earthly father; and we should tender him the homage of our appreciation and love, obeying him and doing his will in all things according to the command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind and strength." This is not only the duty but the joy and delight of the one who lives as he ought, and according to the dictates of his own right reason.

But the one in mortal sin is dumb and silent to all this. He does not like to think of God, for he knows he is living in a state of rebellion against him; that he is defying him. Let God do what he may, he will not obey, and he will take all the consequences. That thought makes him hate God because he knows he cannot escape these consequences. He does not want to speak of God and render to him the homage due him. Neither will he speak to God—*i.e.*, pray. Prayer is most

necessary for him. Without it he will, without doubt, go to perdition; yet he is dumb in regard to prayer. How many are there who go for long times together without prayer. Months may go by without invoking the name of God. A round of distractive employments or of amusements occupy the whole thought and leave no room for the thought of God. One goes to bed at night and rises in the morning without recommending himself to the Divine Protection. His ear is open to the suggestions of Satan, but the voice of the Holy Spirit is stifled. God is pursuing him, trying to make him turn from his evil ways, but he is deaf to his voice, and dumb, so that he makes no prayer. Or if, moved somewhat, he begins to pray, the remembrance of sin and its attractions, and his determination to keep on with it, make him see that his prayer is insincere and a mockery, and he desists; he rises from his knees and goes on in his old career. Yet prayer is his only help. If God does not help him, who will? Is he ready to give up all hope and resign himself without further effort to everlasting perdition? Very few are willing to go that far; they cherish the hope that they will repent before they die. What should he do? Present himself to our Lord, who can heal him; who came into this world to seek and to save that which was

lost ; who did not spare himself the shame and the agony of the cross for the sake of the sinner. When he hears the voice of the Holy Spirit within him, as he will hear it from time to time, let him obey and pray earnestly and heartily for forgiveness, and for strength to lead a new life, and he will be heard. His mouth will be opened : he will pray with his lips and his heart, and the dumb spirit will be cast out.

And the devil makes the one in mortal sin dumb in regard to his neighbor. We are all bound to set a good example to our fellow-men. A good Christian is grateful to God for the graces he has received : that he is forgiven his sins, and received into friendship with his Maker, and made heir of the kingdom of heaven through the redemption made by Christ on the cross. He realizes that it is the pearl of great price which he possesses, and he is most desirous that all others shall have the same. Therefore he strives to show forth in his life all the Christian virtues ; that nothing scandalous or disedifying shall appear in his conduct. He knows how to say the right word in the right place, to encourage the down-hearted, to discourage vice and sin, to teach the ignorant. He can often do more than the priest, and be truly an apostle of the faith among his comrades and acquaintances.

On the other hand, what kind of example does the habitual sinner give his fellow-men? Generally a very bad one. He is known as one who neglects his duties—does not go to Mass or to the Sacraments; or he has the reputation of being a man without religion, devoted to this world and its pleasures; or one whose whole idea is the accumulation of riches; or he is known to be a drunkard, is often seen to be under the influence of liquor. He is no credit to his religion. Often those outside the faith point to him and say: "Here is a specimen Catholic; this is the effect of the Catholic religion." Sometimes he mixes religion and his vice so as to give rise to such remarks. And what is his conversation? With many the mouth is scarcely ever opened without oaths and curses and blasphemy coming out. Others indulge freely in indecent and obscene language. Even the faith itself is ridiculed, and nothing is held sacred. Some may say: "No, it is not so bad as that. Whatever we have done, we have never intended to ridicule our faith." Perhaps not, but in the heat of passion, when the mind is disturbed by drink, one hardly knows what he says. The tongue is loosed to all that is bad and shut up to all that is good.

This is the case with many parents, who destroy their children by their bad example

and evil conversation. They utterly neglect their duty to implant the faith in the minds of their children when they are ready to receive every good impression. They do not teach them their prayers ; they say nothing to them of the evil of sin, of the goodness of God, or of the rewards of heaven. On the contrary, all their talk is of the world, of getting ahead in business, of amusements and frivolous things. They do not see that they attend Mass. The poor children grow up without faith, ready for any kind of sin. These cruel parents are possessed by the dumb demon. They have no love for their children ; they love themselves. No, they do not love themselves ; they love their sins and vices. They are their own greatest enemies.

And the one in mortal sin is dumb in the very things which are necessary for his own salvation. In order to be forgiven he must do penance. Now, penance includes not only contrition, or sorrow for sin, and the true purpose of amendment, but also confession. We must declare our mortal sins to the priest, the representative of Jesus Christ, in order to receive absolution—*i.e.*, forgiveness. This must be done when there is opportunity, and if we will not do it we will not be forgiven. The devil makes us dumb by inspiring in us a horror and dread of confession. How often we see

people stay away for years from confession on account of this dread. They drag about with them a heavy chain, from which they could most easily be relieved. When they have once made up their minds to go, they are astonished to find it so easy, and at their folly in putting it off so long.

Let us present ourselves, then, to Jesus in humility and with earnestness, and ask his help. He will drive out this dumb devil, restore to us our speech, and we shall glorify God here and praise and glorify him for all eternity.

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## THE BREAD OF EVERLASTING LIFE.

*(Fourth Sunday in Lent.)*

Jesus answered them, and said : Amen, amen I say to you : you seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you.—*St. John vi. 26, 27.*

WHEN the disciples came to our Lord and related to him the beheading of John the Baptist, he said to them : We will go awhile into a desert place and rest. So they went aboard a ship and crossed the lake. But the people, among whom he had wrought many miracles of healing, seeing him go aboard, travelled around

the lake on foot to find him again. And as he was conversing with his disciples he looked up and saw a vast throng gathered around him: some five thousand men, without counting the women and children. He healed all their sick people, and taught them all day until near evening. Then the disciples came to him and begged him to send them away, that they might go and get themselves something to eat. He replied that it was not necessary to send them away for that, but they would feed them from what they had, which was only five barley loaves and two fishes. Blessing these and distributing them, they sufficed for near ten thousand people, and the fragments left over filled twelve baskets, corresponding to the twelve Apostles. The people were astonished and wished to make him king; but he fled away entirely alone, leaving even his Apostles.

During the night he came walking over the water to join them, and came to the other side of the lake, and found again the great multitude seeking him, and addressed to them the words of the text: "Amen, amen I say to you: you seek me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you." These people seeing what he

did, believed him to be the Messias; but they had the wrong idea of what the Messias would do. They thought he would establish a kingdom on the earth; that they would conquer all other nations, become wealthy, and have a kind of earthly paradise. But Jesus came down from heaven for something very different. It was to establish a spiritual kingdom; a kingdom in the hearts of men; a kingdom in which God is the Sovereign Ruler, far above all the kings and rulers of this earth; and we are his subjects, bound to obey him in all things, at all times and in all places. For as he is our Creator, from whence we came, so is he our Last End, to whom we must go; to whom if we are united, we shall be happy; if separated from him, miserable.

It was the sole object of our Lord Jesus Christ, in coming down to this earth as man, to establish this kingdom of God on the earth; to establish his Church to be the continuation of his presence on the earth, and to be our Mother to afford us the right teaching and the right nourishment, that we might reach our home in heaven. This is what he constantly preached to the people, and what he taught them all day until evening, on the day when he miraculously fed them in the desert. But they heeded not his teaching; they even did not care much for the miracles of healing. They thought



only of the food they had received, and for that they again flocked around him. He complains: These people follow me not for any real thing, but only because I have fed them; and adds, Labor not for the food that perishes, but for that which gives eternal life, which the Son of man is ready to give you.

What is the meaning of these words? Must we not labor for our meat and drink by which we sustain life? Must we not provide for our health and strength? Must we not provide for our families, to feed them, and clothe and educate them; must we not look out for the future, when perhaps we cannot work, or sickness or old age comes on us. As they say, "Look out for the rainy day." Nobody doubts this. God said to Adam when he drove him out of the Garden of Eden: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread." The words, then, "Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life," mean that the life here in this world is only given us to prepare us for another and better one. If we labor to preserve life and strength, this life and strength must be devoted to the service of God; if we do this, then we really do not labor for the meat that perishes, but we labor for God and for everlasting life. When one does this he always has God in his mind, and labors in such a way as

to keep God's commandments and do his will; and for anything contrary to this he has a horror and abomination. He will do no wrong in order to get this meat he lives on, but will be honest and faithful as God commands him. He works for his family in order to make good Christians of them. He works in such a way that he sets a good example and does not spend his earnings in dissipation and riotous living.

Let us take an example in the merchant. If he only thinks about the money he makes and is always working simply to make more, and forgets that he is God's steward and accountable to him, he labors indeed for the meat that perishes. When he dies all this will perish, and he will go empty-handed to give his account. If he cheats and swindles, or does anything he knows is wrong, much more does he labor for the goods that perish.

On the other hand, if he is honest and truthful, and works in his business with the idea of doing good and spending his money as he ought, for God's glory, then, although he appears rich, he is poor in spirit and labors for the meat which brings him to everlasting life. And let us take the case of the common laborer who lives on his daily wages. If he has no principle; if he studies to idle away his time and do as little as possible, and only works when he is watched for fear he will be

discharged; or wastes the material he works with without caring a bit, he works simply for the meat that perishes. On the other hand, if he considers his employer to be God and not the man who hires him, and works faithfully for the wages he receives, Jesus Christ will accept his services and reward him amply for them.

The father or mother of children who only looks out for their bodily wants, to feed and clothe them, and educate them to make a figure in the world, and neglects their spiritual wants, allowing them to grow up without God in the world, setting them the example of being thoroughly selfish and without faith, labors for the meat that perishes, and may be responsible for their ruin. On the other hand, those who teach them betimes to honor God and pray to him, to avoid sin as they would the bite of a serpent, and see that they receive the sacraments and fulfil their religious duties, labor for the meat that brings them to everlasting life.

Young men and young women who devote themselves to pleasure—going, like butterflies, from one amusement to another, wanting, as they say, to have a good time, quite indifferent whether they commit sin or not—are flagrant examples of seeking the meat that perishes, and will never reach the eternal life unless they

do otherwise. All that do this are miserable. They live this life like people out of their right mind; they enjoy no solid peace or comfort, they are tormented by the very thought of death; they have to stifle all thoughts of it and live like people in a dream or in a state of intoxication, and have no hope or confidence in the future life. Like people on the edge of a precipice, they close their eyes and plunge over it, not willingly but by that decree of the Almighty which must have its fulfilment.

What folly is this when the Son of man is ready to give the bread of everlasting life to all who ask him! What folly especially to Catholics, who have the faith—the faith which contains the teaching of Christ, and lays open the way of salvation so that there is no need of making any mistake. The meat they must feed upon is obedience. “If you love me, keep my commandments.” The love of God is essentially in obedience, not in sentiment and feeling. These things are not in our power. If we obey then, it is because we know who God is, and we respect and honor him, and we desire greatly to love him as he deserves. This is enough. God will accept this good will and impart to us the feeling when he sees fit.

Let us, then, be animated with great courage

and determination, make it our chief business to seek God and his justice, and every day we shall increase in the true love of God: that charity which shall never fail; which shall make us like Christ, meek and humble of heart, charitable and kind to our fellow-men, patient and long-suffering to take from the hands of God whatever he shall see fit to send us, and the promise of God to us will be true—Peace on earth to men of good will, and a share in the glory of God in the highest.

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## THE HEARERS OF GOD ARE HIS FRIENDS.

*(Passion Sunday.)*

Which of you shall convince me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe me? He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.—*St. John viii. 46, 47.*

A MAN finds himself existing here on the earth with a mind able to think and to know the reason for things. He did not come here of his own will; indeed, he had nothing to do with his own coming here. And he finds that he is not to stay here any definite time, but will have to leave some time or other; at some uncertain time of which he knows nothing. And yet we have the feeling and the

conviction that we do not wholly die, that the rational part of us remains alive when the body dies; we cannot believe at all that once existing, we shall ever cease to exist and go back into nothingness. We see the wonderful arrangement of everything around us and how everything is adapted to carry out the purpose of its being; and so perceiving, we see that one Great Being must have made all, and that we must resemble him, though infinitely below him. The idea of God comes into our minds, and that we owe to him our being, and that we are bound to him, to obey him and conform ourselves entirely to his will. We see that what we need to know with certainty is, who made us, what he made us for, and what we are to do to carry out his purpose. As we cannot by our own thinking determine these things, we look to the one who made us to make known to us what his will is, what he made us for. Human reason is not sufficient, and therefore God must reveal himself to us.

And this he has done. He has sent to us a Messenger who is duly and properly accredited to us as coming from him, and who has taught us fully all that it is necessary for us to know. This Messenger was described by a long series of prophets among a certain people, the Jews, and all the circumstances of

his coming, so that when he should come they would be able to recognize him, and listen to the message he should deliver the same as if God should speak to them himself. About nineteen hundred years ago he appeared. He came from an 'obscure village suddenly and began to teach. He taught in fulness the most sublime doctrine, which had been taught before by prophets and inspired men only incompletely: that there is a God infinite in all respects—in power, wisdom, and goodness; who is from all eternity, without beginning and without end; who has created all things out of nothing, and created us; and that we are created to his image and likeness, and destined by him to partake of his own infinite glory and happiness for all eternity. But that in order to reach this destiny we must be faithful and honor him by obeying all his commandments, and thus complying with his will; that if we refused to do this and thus cut ourselves loose from him, we should at the end of this life find ourselves cut off from him and be for ever unhappy.

And he did not ask to be believed on his bare word. He gave abundant proof that he was the Messenger from God by innumerable miracles or events which could be produced by no human power or ingenuity, and could

only come from God himself. These miracles took the form mostly of curing all sorts of sicknesses and infirmities, such as restoring sight to the blind, making the lame walk, the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak; raising the dead to life again—things done instantaneously and in great numbers, leaving no room for gradual improvement or for any application of a human remedy; done in the sight of large multitudes. “They brought the sick of all sorts of diseases to him from all the country around, and he healed them all.” He appealed to these miracles as proof of his mission from God and of the truth of his teaching, for God would not lend his power to further lying and falsehood. He said, if you will not believe in me on my word, believe in me on account of the works which you are witnesses of. Having thus established his Divine mission and his truth, so as not to leave room for doubt, he declared who he was: the Eternal Son of God, equal to his Father, God Himself, who had come down on this earth and taken upon himself our human nature, and became a man without ceasing to be God, and demanding that we should believe in him and follow his instructions.

But his doctrine did not suit many proud and selfish men: men who would not acknowledge their obligation to obey God, and who



arrogated everything they had to themselves ; who wanted to lord it over their fellow-men ; who were dishonest and bent on getting rich by unlawful means, or who were bent on gratifying their wicked passions. To be told that they must be honest, charitable, humble, as creatures of God, and patient, did not suit them. They hated him who insisted on this, and they wanted to put him to death. Blind fools as they were, seeing the finger of God, knowing they could not escape the power of God which would eventually reach them, they thought to put him to death. They brought out all kinds of accusations against him—said that he wrought these miracles, which they could not deny, by the power of Satan and not of God.

Christ replies to them : “ Which of you shall convince me of sin ? ” In all the teaching they had heard he challenges them to point out the least sin. And then he says : “ If I tell you the truth, why do ye not believe ? If you were of God, you would receive the words of God. But you will not hear them because you are not of God.” These Jews blinded themselves. They felt in their hearts that he spoke the truth of God and that the miracles they saw were God’s doing, but they stifled and smothered the voice of their own consciences rather than amend their lives. They were willing

even to kill God's own accredited agent rather than give up their vices and evil practices. And afterwards they did kill him; not because of their own power to do it, but because he himself willingly submitted to death, to offer himself a ransom for our sins and to set us an example of submitting to the will of God under the most trying possible circumstances.

These wicked men accomplished their purpose to their own ruin. And from their example we may draw most useful instruction for ourselves. Our Lord said to them: "If you were of God, you would hear his words; but because you are not of God, you will not hear him." This furnishes us a means of knowing whether we are of God or not. If we hear his truth gladly, then we belong to him. If we refuse to hear him, then we are none of his. What is it to hear the words of God? Not merely to hear with the outward ear, but to practise what we hear. Not merely to know the truth, but to live according to it.

There are some who will not hear at all. These are proud and self-sufficient men, who put themselves in place of God, and turn a deaf ear to all his revelation. They prefer to know nothing—to grope along in the dark, to live in total ignorance of the purpose of their being, rather than submit to the clear light of revelation. They are the apostles of

darkness, and pride themselves on depriving other people of light and consolation, and diffusing a thick darkness all around them. I hope there are very few such among those who have had the light of the Catholic faith, but I have met some specimens here and there.

There is another class of men, and I am sorry to say much more numerous, who indeed have the faith, but do not hear it gladly. They hear it, but it is with dislike, because they are not willing to live up to it. They are in sin and will not give up sin. In some respects their faith is a good thing, because it stirs them up to do better, to be in earnest about it, and regain God's favor; but in other respects it is a disadvantage, because if they do not retract it will increase their responsibility and their punishment. "He that is ignorant of the Lord's will and therefore does not do it, will be beaten with few stripes; but he that knew it and failed to do it, shall be beaten with many stripes." How can the man who wilfully neglects to attend Mass or other duties expect the kingdom of heaven? Does he expect to obtain eternal happiness when he is too lazy to take the least trouble for it? How can the man who gets drunk, or indulges in impure habits, or steals or cheats, or indulges in hatred and revenge, expect to enter the kingdom of Heaven, where nothing

impure or dishonest or revengeful can find admittance? Let the sinner turn from his evil ways, and he shall live. Jesus in his love said to them, while they reviled him: "Amen, amen I say to you, if any man keep my word he shall not see death for ever."

Keep his word; pray earnestly for strength to keep his word. He will give it to you. Then you will be glad to hear his word, and you will have the proof that you are God's friend and that you will not taste the death of the soul.

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## CHRIST ENTERS JERUSALEM.

*(Palm Sunday.)*

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: Behold, thy King will come to thee, the just and Saviour: he is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.—*Zacharias ix. 9.*

THIS prophecy of Zacharias was made some hundreds of years before the coming of our Lord. The prophet saw in vision exactly what took place afterwards, and spoke of it that all might know the true Messiah when he should come by its fulfilment as well as that of many other prophecies regarding him. This short-lived triumphal entrance into Jerusalem was appointed by Divine Providence for our in-

struction and for our joy and consolation, for the prophecy has its application now and will have it until the end of the world.

The daughter of Sion here spoken of is the Church of God, which is bidden to rejoice greatly at the coming of the Saviour, with hidden majesty and power, in a form most meek and gentle; at the triumph of God's goodness over all the sin and wickedness of the world, and the guarantee that the men of good will shall have a final triumph of everlasting happiness in heaven. The daughter of Sion also represents the soul of each one of us. And have we not cause to rejoice greatly, even to shout for joy, that we have been liberated from the slavery of sin, made the friends of the Almighty, the source and fountain of all good; our minds filled with holy desires and love to God and to our fellow-men; and fortified with courage to face all the ills and troubles of life permitted by God to befall us: the decay of our faculties, and even death itself when it shall come to us?

When we see the God of heaven, our Creator and last end, meek and poor, sitting on an ass, entering the city of Jerusalem, we are encouraged to hope all things. We see the vanity of pride and riches; that the kingdom of God is not of this world, but in our hearts; that if we imitate the King of the universe,

our own King, in being meek and lowly, God will exalt us and raise us, and we shall be like him.

Christ himself prepared this grand but meek and lowly entrance into Jerusalem that, as he said, all might be fulfilled. In old times the Jews were told to procure for themselves on the 10th day the lamb which was to be eaten on the 14th, the Passover, which commemorated their salvation when the hand of God smote the first-born of the Egyptians. Now, our Lord, the Lamb of God who would be slain for the salvation of the world, would enter into Jerusalem to offer himself in sacrifice four days before the Pasch. He would enter it, not with the pomp and ceremony of an earthly king, but as the Ruler of hearts; the homage he desired was that of love to be rendered to him in return for his love for us.

He directed his disciples to procure for him an ass, the lowliest of beasts, to sit upon; all his trappings were the poor garments of his followers which he sat upon. And so he began his journey. But presently a throng of people from all the country around gathered, some going before and some following, he seated in the midst, his head uncovered, in the simplest garments, most gentle and unaffected, but with an indescribable dignity and majesty. An immense enthusiasm and joy possessed the mul-

titude. They called to mind his wonderful deeds, the innumerable miracles they had witnessed. They thought of the last great one, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, which produced a great commotion in the city, which could not be disputed, and which had converted many even of the Pharisees to believe in him. Here was the Messiah so long expected. Here was the one who had only to speak and the thing was done. Here was the Liberator who would establish his kingdom over all the earth. They were simple people mostly, and ready to recognize the truth when they saw it. They shouted Hosanna—*i.e.*, Lord, save us,—Hosanna to the Son of David, the Messiah! They strewed olive branches before him; they even took off their outer garments and laid them on the ground for him to tread upon. Others came out of Jerusalem carrying palm branches in their hands—the palm, the emblem of victory. As the evangelist says, the whole city was in commotion. No doubt the Spirit of God moved their hearts and caused them to shout for joy, that might be prefigured as the joy which should fill the hearts of the faithful when, in faith, they think of the benignity and love of God, the Saviour of the world and of themselves.

In that crowd were many different sorts of people. Some were sincere believers, who had

listened to the teaching of Jesus and profited by it. Their thoughts were on heaven, and they sincerely loved Him who had pointed out to them the way. They were overflowing with gratitude, and no doubt were the ones who believed afterwards at the preaching of St. Peter. Others had a glimpse of the glory of God; but they were of this world—they were looking for their own selfish interests and had little idea of the spiritual kingdom of God in the soul. Perhaps many of these a few days later shouted, "Away with him! Crucify him!"

And then there were the proud and haughty Pharisees and Doctors and Scribes, who were all taken up with the world and its riches, and honors, and dignities. These hated Jesus, for they could not bear the constant reproofs he was obliged to give them. They saw his miracles and could not help acknowledging them; but they were foolish enough to bid defiance to the Almighty; to deceive themselves, and hug the lie to their bosom, that it was not the power of God but of Beelzebub which did all this. They reproved our Lord, and asked why he did not stop the mouths of the children who were shouting his praises. Our Lord replied, If their mouths were stopped, the very stones would cry out.

To which of these classes do you belong?



Are you among those who dislike our Lord and would compass his death? of those who are so devoted to this world and its riches and honors that you can think of nothing else?—that you consider religion, which interferes with these ideas and intrudes itself, as something you do not want to have anything to do with?—who have deliberately made choice of the kingdom of Satan and rejected that of God? Then, if you had been present at the procession in Jerusalem, you would have been angry, and have plotted the death of the Son of man. Or if among those who have no constancy, who to-day sing hosannas and to-morrow cry out Crucify Him! Or of those who are good Christians, who realize what Christ has done for them, and who are grateful and full of joy; who say constantly, He is the Son of David, the Messiah; for ever praise and blessing be to him. Thanks be to him, for he has come, not in the whirlwind, not in thunder and lightning as on Mount Sinai, but meek and humble, that I may not be frightened and downcast at the sight of his Majesty; but see him as he was, a little helpless infant in the stable at Bethlehem, a helper of a poor carpenter at Nazareth, or riding into Jerusalem meek and poor, seated on an ass and receiving the homage of the hearts of his followers.

What does he ask of me? To follow his

example: to behave myself as what I am—a creature, deriving all I have from the bounty of my Creator; to be humble before him and obedient, loving the will of God above all the treasures of the earth, and striving to fulfil it in all things, small as well as great; forgiving my enemies even as He has forgiven me, and loving all men sincerely: things not hard to do, and made easy to do when I reflect on the conduct of my Saviour, which was nothing more than this. Holy Church sets forth this Palm Sunday for our reflection. She solemnly blesses palms, or other green boughs, and distributes them to the faithful, and then institutes a procession in which the priests and others carry these palms in their hands and sing hosannas to the King of Glory. The palms represent victory: the victory over the world and its allurements; the victory over Satan and all his deceits; the victory over all our unruly passions, over sin and death; the triumphant entry into heaven.

What joy and exultation should the mere thought of this bring us! The world and all that is in it cannot bring this joy; it is only peace of conscience, the union of the soul with God, which can bring it. So we pray, "Give us that peace which the world cannot give." Whatever may have been our past life, let us take courage. Jesus Christ

our Saviour will readily pardon us, no matter how enormous and numerous our sins may have been. He was the most amiable and loving of men, and he is the same in heaven to-day. He cries out to us, "Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you. He that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Let us follow him, and we shall carry the palms in our hands at the last day, when he comes to judge the world.

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## RISEN WITH CHRIST.

*(Easter Sunday.)*

Fear not you : for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.  
—*St. Matt. xxviii. 5, 6.*

THERE is a great difference between this earthly life and the life of glory in heaven. This is the life of labor and exertion. This is a life of trial and suffering ; that is one of complete rest. This is the school of painful preparation ; that is the time of reaping the fruit of our labors. This is the cold ante-chamber of waiting ; that is the admission to the eternal banquet, the marriage feast of the Son of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ went through all the

trials and sufferings of this life. Indeed, in suffering he took more than his share—more than any one else, for he would be a pattern and a model for us, to encourage us, to give us a sufficient reason, when we reflect on his life and death, to carry us through all that shall befall us, and grace to help us and make us hope for ample recompense in the future.

He told his Apostles what was to happen to him: that he was to be scourged, mocked, and crucified; and added that he would arise from the dead on the third day. They did not understand that this was to be literally fulfilled, but thought that it referred to something else.

But it was fulfilled to the very letter. He was mocked, laughed at and derided; he was most inhumanly scourged from head to foot, and finally nailed to the cross, where he hung more than three hours; then, completely exhausted, he gave up the ghost. He hung lifeless on the cross. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. Being the eve of the Sabbath, the bodies were not allowed to remain on the cross on the Sabbath. The soldiers came and broke the legs of the two thieves to make sure of their death; but seeing our Lord already dead, one of them pierced his side with a lance to make doubly sure.

Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple, and a mem-

bet of the Sanhedrim, boldly went to Pilate and begged the body, anointed it with precious spices, wrapped it in fine linen, and laid it in his own new sepulchre, hewn out of the solid rock. There was no way of entering the tomb but by the door, as its sides and top were the solid rock.

The chief priests and Pharisees, who had caused Christ's death, remembered that he had said he would arise again on the third day, and they went to Pilate and asked that the sepulchre should be guarded all that time, and sealed and made sure. Their request was granted; they were told they could make it as sure as they would. A great stone was rolled against the door and the guard was set.

But at midnight, on the third day, our Lord arose from the dead. Nothing could retain him. He passed out of the sepulchre, although the stone was still before the door. Then an angel descended and rolled it away. His face shone like the lightning, and his raiment was like the snow. The guards fell to the ground like dead men. In the morning they went and told the chief priests what had happened, and were told by them to say nothing about it to any one; to give out that the disciples, while they were asleep, had come and stolen away the body.

Poor fools! to try to resist the Almighty. But they were blinded by pride and avarice. They were willing to suffer the consequences sure to overtake them finally, so that they might only have the present moment to themselves. It is exactly the same at the present moment with sinners who shut their eyes and persist in their evil courses. So our Lord arose by his own Divine Power from the dead.

Early in the morning the women came to the sepulchre. They found the stone rolled away. An angel was sitting in the sepulchre. They were greatly afraid. He said to them: "Fear not: ye seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He has risen, as he said."

Our Lord shortly after appeared to them, and later the same day to the Apostles, and repeatedly afterwards to the disciples—as St. Paul says, to five hundred at once. He conversed with them, he ate with them. He made St. Thomas, who doubted, put his hands upon the wounds in his hands and feet, and into the wound made by the centurion in his side; and at last ascended into heaven in the sight of a large number—demonstrating the truth of his resurrection by innumerable proofs.

This is the greatest of all miracles. Christ in his life-time brought back to life many who were dead. And now, dead and lying in the grave, he comes to life by his own power,

and remains here for forty days in the sight of all, to found and establish his Church, to last until the end of time.

What a joyful time it was for his disciples, who loved him so much and who had been so grievously disappointed! They had hoped that his kingdom would be established on this earth. They had thought he would interfere by his divine power to thwart the designs of his enemies; but they had stood under the cross and nothing of the kind happened; they saw him die and were present at his entombment, and gave up all hopes of seeing him again in this world. Now they find, to their surprise, the stone rolled away; they see the angel in the sepulchre and hear that he has risen. They see in this not only the satisfaction of their love, but also the renewal of the Divine Power, and it excited in them the joyful hope of everlasting union with him in eternity.

And it should also excite in us the liveliest joy, for it is a guarantee of our own resurrection and union with God. As Holy Church sings: "This day that the Lord hath made, let us exult and rejoice in it." We see our Lord arising from the tomb. This is the sign that death is overcome—death, that we so much dread. What appeared to us a separation from all that we know and all that we

seem to be, an extinction of our being, reducing us to the dust we were made of, is only the entrance into a new and better life, a life free from all annoyances and troubles and full to overflowing with a happiness beyond all our powers of imagination.

We see our Lord passing here a most painful life : going through the helplessness of infancy ; living for many years a life unknown and hidden, in poverty and labor ; then going around in his public ministry, living on alms, having not a place to lay his head, the butt of calumny and ridicule, and then dying the death of a malefactor. Now all is changed : he is glorious, he passes through the closed doors—nothing obstructs him ; he knows no longer either hunger or thirst. He rises bodily to heaven in the sight of his followers. No wonder he exclaimed, " It is consummated," or finished. All our troubles will one day be finished. This tedious, disagreeable world will be over. Let us endure it with patience : it will be over very soon at the longest. The thought of Christ's resurrection will cheer us under the greatest trials which can befall us. No doubt our Lord, though willingly enduring all things for us, was glad when it was over ; and so we shall be glad when our trial is over and the prize has been won.

But how shall we be able to rejoice greatly



in the thought of the resurrection? St. Paul tells us: "If ye are risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God; taste those things which are above, and not those things which are on the earth." What is it to have risen with Christ? It is to be in the grace of God; to have abandoned a sinful life and sought and obtained forgiveness. This we do when, moved by God's grace, we enter into ourselves and realize our miserable condition in sin; are truly sorry for it, determined to quit it and live a new life; make an humble confession and receive absolution. We are thus restored to God's favor; whereas we were dead in sin, we became alive in Jesus Christ. Great ought to be our joy. It is a favor from God more precious than all the world; for if we owned the whole world it would be just as bad for us, without God's grace, as if we had absolutely nothing.

And we should show our joy and gratitude by taking measures to keep the gift given us. This is done by giving our minds and hearts to the business of loving God and saving our souls. If we give our attention to the things of earth, we cannot also give it to the things of heaven. The one thing will crowd out the other. We cannot serve two masters. In serving the world we become

its servants, and must obey its commands; and that opens the door to all kinds of sin—sins of the world, the flesh, and the devil. By thinking of the things above, we learn to love them; the thought of God and of heaven fills our minds, purifies them from all low and grovelling pleasure, gives us peace—a clear conscience, which is a source of pure delight. The faith becomes our shield and our buckler; and living up to its teachings, we pass our lives and go without fear to God above us, to our Lord sitting at the right hand of his Father.

## Sundays after Easter.

### PEACE OF MIND.

(*Low Sunday.*)

And Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them : Peace be to you.—*St. John xx. 19.*

OUR Blessed Lord came down from heaven and took our nature upon him. He led a very hard life here on earth. As he said : "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He slept often on the bare ground. He lived simply, was often hungry and thirsty. He was tired and weary travelling on foot. He was reviled and hated and despised. Yet for all this he was in perfect peace. Nothing strikes us more in his life than the perfect tranquillity and peace which he never lost even in his agonies on the cross.

And the reason of this he gives himself. He was without sin, and his soul was united to God. The will of God was his will. As he said : "My meat is to do the will of him who sent me." This same peace he wished to his disciples when he appeared to them after his resurrection.

He wishes it to us all. "Peace I leave with you ; my peace I give to you. Not as the world giveth do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid."

Every true Christian has a right to this peace. Let us see how this is.

Trouble and fear come from the expectation of evil. We all naturally seek what we think is good and avoid that which appears evil. And when a thing appears to us very good we seek it ardently and are not at rest until we obtain it.

This we see every day among men in the world. A fortune, to be rich, appears to them the great object to be attained. Then they say to themselves: I can spend my life in ease and comfort, and I shall be satisfied and at peace. We all know how false this is, but still it continues to cheat and deceive us. If we were immortal and going to live as we do now for ever, there might be some good sense and reason in this, but we all know that life is absolutely uncertain and all our hopes may be brought to nothing in the twinkling of an eye.

There is a good beyond all comparison greater than any such thing. We are immortal, and created to be perfectly happy for all eternity in the presence of God, the infinitely powerful, the infinitely wise, and the

infinitely good. This is a solid good, a good that cannot be taken away from us, a good which will satisfy us completely, and in comparison with which all other good sinks into complete insignificance.

This good has been put in our hands through the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for us, on the condition of keeping his commandments.

When we are in the grace of God we possess this good. If we have been in sin and are sorry for our sins, and are willing to forsake them, then we get this grace of God and are the heirs of this eternal life. And this is essential and solid peace—the peace of God.

We worry and fret about many things—the things of the world; and our daily necessities may cause us anxieties; but if we are in the grace of God, we are free from our principal worry, the weight of the displeasure of God. We enjoy, after all, a solid peace which we can fall back upon. We can pray to God, and get consolation for all our other troubles.

Do we not see this in the case of the sinner who is waked up by the grace of God to see his sinful condition. How troubled he is: his conscience reproaches him. He sees that he has lived for nothing; his pleasures fall away from him; he is disgusted with himself. He has not been a reasonable being, but has

brought himself down to the level of the animal.

Now he longs to get back to innocence and to obedience to his Father in heaven. With contrition he makes his confession, and with a firm purpose of amendment he receives forgiveness and the favor of God once more. What a peace and what a joy comes in his soul in place of the horror and trouble of sin!

Without God's grace there is no peace. As the prophet Isaias says: "For the wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire."

There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord. Why, then, does any one persist in sin? Why do Catholics, who have the faith, keep out of God's grace for years on years? How foolish! when God is so ready to receive them. "Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you."

When the sinner shall turn away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and will do that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Why live in a turmoil and disturbance, like a hell on earth, when it is entirely in your power to enjoy a heavenly peace—that peace which the world and all its pleasures cannot give you?

It is a wonderful thing, and something

which cannot be understood, how Catholics, who have the faith, can possibly persist in vile abuse of God's holy name as they do, cursing and swearing, in unchaste and filthy language, in drunkenness and lust, in dishonesty and cheating, when they see clearly, if they ever stop to think, the awful risk they are running, and the inestimable good, both here in this world and in the next, they are depriving themselves of. They are like people out of their head and in a fever of delirium. If there is any one in sound of my voice in this condition, I say to him, in the words of the prophet: "Cast away from you all your transgressions by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. And why will you die, O house of Israel? for I desire not the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: return ye and live."

But you say, although we believe we are in a state of grace, and mean to keep so, yet we find constantly that things occur which agitate us and disturb our peace. Our own imperfections, the tumult of our unruly passions, our affairs going wrong, our friends getting sick or dying, ingratitude of those whom we have benefited, and many other things I cannot enumerate, make us sad, and we are naturally disturbed by them. Now, in all these

things we have a remedy—the holy will of God.

The will of God rules all things, and his will is our sanctification and merit and salvation. We are in a state of trial; as gold is purified in the fire, so is the just man purified in the fire of affliction. The trials of life will come upon us whether we will or not, for God sends them. Sickness, death, bereavement, poverty, calumny, ingratitude are the portion of every one, in unequal quantities, just as God sees fit to deal them out to us.

If we do not conform ourselves to them, then our suffering is intolerable, and there is nothing to console us. We simply live in despair and wrought up to furious opposition. But if we conform our will to God's holy will, we have a good and sufficient reason for resignation, and peace and joy take the place of agitation.

All things work together for good to those who love God. All things; there is no exception. We must suffer; but this consideration takes off the sharp edge of our suffering. It is this which enables us to endure our pains. It is this which reconciles us to death when it approaches.

If we would be in peace as far as it is possible in this life, we must practise this conformity of our will to the will of God. The



events of life will furnish us with plenty of occasions. When we are inclined to murmur let us make an act of resignation. Let these acts be made in our prayers constantly until it becomes a second nature with us, and then the peace of God, which the world cannot give, God will give us—a peace which will endure for all eternity. Amen.

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## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

*(Second Sunday after Easter.)*

I am the good shepherd : and I know mine, and mine know me.—*St. John x. 14.*

OUR Lord uses a comparison in the gospel of to day which is full of instruction. He compares himself to a shepherd, whose business and occupation is to take care of his flock, and whose mind, and heart too, is in his business ; who knows his sheep, each one of them, and unceasingly occupies himself in considering what will make them thrive and be for their comfort. He compares us also to sheep who have such a shepherd, who have learned to know his voice, and love to hear it, and run gladly at the sound of it, and look up to him with full confidence and affection.

This is a charming and delightful compari-

son. It warms our hearts to imagine the good shepherd coming out into the field and calling as he approaches, while the whole flock prick up their ears at the sound they love so well, and come scampering across the field to meet him, and bleat out their satisfaction in their own expressive ways and rub up against him. To see him count them to find out if any one be missing, and examine each one with his eye to discover if any harm had befallen him ; and if he sees one lame and suffering, how he goes up and says " Poor fellow ! " and calls him by name, and binds up the wounded limb, and goes ahead and leads them all out to a green pasture with a brook of fresh water running through it. We love such a man and he loves us, because he has a fresh and warm heart, only too ready to do a kindness to any one who needs it and whenever he gets an opportunity.

The Eternal Wisdom and the Eternal Truth, our Lord Jesus Christ, used this very comparison to let us know the true relation existing between himself and us, that we might, by reflecting over it, enter a little into the sentiments which fill his heart towards us and make us understand the sort of love he entertains for us, that we might be encouraged and consoled in our down-heartedness, and place a more implicit and entire confidence in his good-

ness and mercy, and so learn to love him in return with a real and true love.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who *knows* his sheep. There is a great deal of meaning in the expression, "And I know mine." A man utters that word *mine* in a way that he does not any other. There is a satisfaction in it which he does not derive from any other. "That house is mine, that field is mine, those children are mine"—*i.e.*, they are, as it were, a part of myself; I value them and I love them accordingly. So our Lord calls us his own—mine—and so we are. "We are his people and the sheep of his pasture." There is nothing surprising in this when we reflect a little upon it, for "he made us, and not we ourselves," and therefore "we are his people and the sheep of his pasture." He is our Creator, and has made us in his own image and likeness. He loves the trees and the stones and the plants which he has created because he made them, and one always loves what he makes himself; but he loves us above all these things because we are rational and intelligent creatures resembling himself. This is the very reason Job used when he pleaded with the Almighty in his affliction. "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me wholly round about, and dost *thou* thus cast me down headlong on a sudden?"

We are *his* by creation, but *his* by a still stronger reason. For our Lord has made great sacrifices for us, and undergone great labors and great sufferings on our account. To elevate us above our natural condition and make us sharers in the Divine nature, he condescended to leave heaven and come down on the earth and take our flesh and nature upon himself, and become one of ourselves in all things except sin. For our sake he lived a poor and hard life here for many years, and at last laid down his life on the cross. Now, one loves particularly what one suffers for. If a mother has a sickly and delicate child, a cripple or deformed child, and this child costs her pain and exertion for a long time, and afterwards this child dies, she feels its loss all the more keenly for all the trouble it has cost her. So the Lord remembers all his pains and weariness, and his sufferings and death when he was crucified, and each one of them makes us his in an especial sense. He has not only made us, but afterwards purchased and bought us at the price of his own blood.

He knows us, then, as the father and mother know the members of their own family. He says: "I know mine, and mine know me: as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father." The Father and the Son are of one substance. They are one God, though in two

distinct persons. Nothing can be closer than the union of the two, and this is the mode of the knowledge of our Lord of us. He knows us in the sense that he is a close and attentive observer of all that relates to us. He watches us with the most ardent and affectionate desire for our welfare. We perhaps fancy that he has forgotten us, that he does not care for us, and maybe that in our vexations or troubles he is not friendly to us; for we say to ourselves: If he is really my friend, why does he not remove this pain from me? why does he not show himself and fill me with delight? why is not virtue easier to me than it is, and why do I not have more pleasure in the service of God?

We do not reflect on what even our own right reason teaches us about this: that our Lord Jesus Christ is Wisdom itself. He really knows us, and knows what is to our advantage. We do not know ourselves, we do not know what is good for ourselves. It is like a father with his little children. He watches their dispositions and characters and brings them up accordingly, that they may be qualified to act their part as men and women. The children do not understand why such or such a thing is forbidden, why they are told to do that which is repugnant to their inclination; but they know that their father knows it better than

they know it themselves, and that clears up the questions of their minds.

The fact is, not a single thing befalls us which is not, in the infinite wisdom, designed to be a great good to us. It is a tender and unwearying love which measures out all things according to our circumstances and our capacities. What a comfort it ought to be to us that God knows us with this intimate and loving knowledge. Why, if we realized it, there would be no such thing as misfortune to us. With a pure intention on our part, or with the simple knowledge of what is really important, and what is trifling and unworthy of attention, we should find a treasure of good and of comfort in what, if we did not understand it, would seem simply painful and unendurable. The sheep do not mind having to travel over a rocky and bare country, following their shepherd, because they know that he is going to lead them to a fine pasturage. The laborer works cheerfully and bears the fatigue when his wages are high. We follow a good shepherd and we work for a good master.

We who are members of the Holy Church are particularly his own sheep. We are in his fold already, and for us he particularly laid down his life; for he says: "And I lay down my life for my sheep. Other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also must I bring:

and they shall hear my voice : and there shall be made one fold and one shepherd." Consider, then, how intimately our Lord knows and watches over those of the Church who go astray. It is surprising, indeed, that any Catholic can go astray. Why, has he not the knowledge of salvation? Does he not know that through the infinite goodness of God and our Lord Jesus Christ he has received the gift of the true faith? Does he not know that he has been born again through the Holy Ghost, and made an heir of the kingdom of heaven? Does he not know that all depends on his faithfulness, that nothing can snatch him out of the hands of our Lord except his own deliberate sin? Does he not know that by sin he puts our Lord at defiance and dares him to vengeance, while by sincere obedience the Lord will forgive him all his sins at once and take him into favor? Why, it is astonishing how any Catholic can commit sin? A poor Indian was converted to the faith and received baptism after being instructed. A year after he had an opportunity to confess to a priest who came where he lived. But he had no sins to relate. The father said: "Have you committed no sin within the year?" "Oh, father," was his reply, "how could I be so ungrateful to my Lord, after he forgave me all my sins, and gave me a right to heaven, as to

sin again? As long as I live I will not be unmindful."

But still many do go astray and depart from God through their own wickedness. These poor sheep our Lord goes after. He himself tells us how "What man having a hundred sheep, and one of them goeth astray, who does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and goeth after that which is lost?" Our Lord seeks him in all ways. He speaks by his interior voice and rouses him to return once more. Why, he says, will you persist in sin? why render yourself so unhappy even now? why lay up wrath against the day of wrath which must shortly come upon you? Why not give up that wicked habit, that dishonest gain, and reconcile yourself to God? So our Lord speaks and urges, and will not leave the sinner in peace, but troubles him until he returns. And if he does not return our Lord goes after him with sickness, with misfortune, with loss of what he holds dear, until the man perceives that nothing is true or lasting but God himself. Ah, he says, I cannot fill my belly with the husks of the swine. I will arise and go to my Father, whom I have despised, and seek comfort from him in whom alone comfort is.

Jesus knows the sinner who is his sheep, and hunts him up and brings him on his



shoulders back into the sheepfold. There is not a single Catholic in this congregation whom our Lord Jesus Christ does not watch with the most ardent desire for his reformation and his salvation. But though he uses the comparison of leaving the ninety and nine who are of the fold to seek the lost one, that is only to show his thirst for our salvation and the dreadfulness of its loss; he does not really leave his faithful ones for a moment. "Son," said the father to his eldest son, who complained of the feast made for the younger, and thought himself neglected, "all that I have is thine." So we may say that our Lord is wholly occupied in our welfare and our happiness. He diffuses peace and joy in the heart. He cheers us up in our despondency. He detaches our souls from earthly things and fastens them upon the imperishable. He is our only refuge and sure support when all else fails us.

Jesus Christ knows us. Let us, then, learn to know him. If we have departed from him, let us consider his mercy and tender compassion, and turn from all our evil ways to be truly and sincerely his friends. If we are his friends already, let us cultivate more intimate relations with him; pray more to him, think more on his goodness, ponder over his actions and his teachings until we become thoroughly

penetrated by them, and understand that Jesus is our truest, our greatest, our sincerest friend. Thus shall we become sure of our salvation, and no man shall snatch us out of his hands. Amen.

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## SUFFERING A CAUSE OF JOY.

*(Third Sunday after Easter.)*

Of this do you inquire among yourselves, because I said : A little while, and you shall not see me : and again a little while, and you shall see me. Amen, amen I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice : and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.—*St. John. xvi. 19, 20.*

THE Apostles followed our Lord and believed in him, and were in the main spiritually inclined, but were as yet very imperfect. They had it in their minds that a temporal kingdom was to be established, and ideas of worldly power and grandeur, so they could not take in the thought of the suffering and death of our Lord, by which we were to be redeemed and a purely spiritual kingdom of the soul established. They heard our Lord's words, which were plain and direct, but they attached no meaning to them.

He simply wished to tell them that he would be taken up and delivered to the gentiles

to be put to death, and they would be deprived of the sight of him for a short time; and that after that he would arise from the dead, and they would see him again—and that their sorrow would be turned into joy. So he explains what will take place more fully. Amen, amen I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, while the world shall rejoice; and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. We know how this was fulfilled. The Apostles were utterly demoralized. They were frightened and fled. They were completely discouraged and disappointed. They looked for him to work some mighty miracle and deliver himself from the hands of his enemies, and put them to flight, while nothing of the kind happened. They saw him most ignominiously treated, like a common malefactor, nailed to the cross and expiring upon it, while the Jews were rejoicing that they had accomplished their purpose and that this troublesome prophet had been finally disposed of.

But after the third day all this was suddenly changed. They saw their Master again alive and well. They conversed with him, ate with him, and witnessed his ascension into heaven, and they realized that as he had ascended so he would come again and give them an everlasting inheritance. As he said: they should

rejoice with a joy that no man or human power could take away.

And this is applicable to us. For a little while we shall not see him: and again a little while, and we shall see him and shall rejoice. During this life we shall not see our Lord, for he has ascended. This life is a little while. What is it compared to eternity? If we should live a hundred years, what is it? It is a mere speck in the great ocean of time. Take a man of eighty, which is longer than most people live, and ask him what he thinks of the length of his life. He will tell you that it has gone as if it were a single day, like the cloud that sweeps across the face of the sky. Our Lord, in speaking of this little time, referred to his suffering and death and called it little and momentary; and so it was compared to the glory that followed. And our Lord, in speaking to the Apostles, not only referred to their grief and sorrow during the three days of the Passion, but also that of their whole future lives. "They will put you out of the synagogues: yea the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth a service to God." He said that, so that when these things should happen they should remember what he had said and cheer themselves by the thought of the recompense which awaited them for all eternity. He does not say, "You

shall 'be sorrowful and suffer, and shall afterwards rejoice'; but your sorrow shall be turned into joy, *i.e.*, the more persecution and sorrow you have to suffer the greater shall be your joy—it shall all be turned into joy. On every occasion when you shall be called on to suffer something call this to mind, and be consoled and strengthened to suffer cheerfully. As St. Paul says—and he suffered all sorts of hardships: "For I reckon the trials of this life are small and insignificant, and not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed."

The truth is, this life is not one of unmixed happiness, but full of crosses. In the first place, it comes far short of all our aspirations. We would fain know and understand things, and we find ourselves painfully ignorant. We grope our way in the dark, and acquire a little knowledge with great effort—just about enough to make us think we know nothing. And we are always seeking good that we find out of our reach. Our happiness is only a glimpse of the happiness we desire; it always falls short of what we see to be the perfect thing we have in our minds, and the uncertainty of life is ever before the minds of those who think. It is a strange thing that no fixed tenure of life exists; that we are liable to leave this world at any moment and be cut short in all our undertakings. There is no

such thing as real life insurance ; no amount of talent, or learning, or riches can guarantee us an hour. This is indeed the dead fly which gives a bad odor to the ointment of all worldly enjoyment. Our Lord rightly chose a life of suffering for our example, for human life is a life of suffering. It needs no argument and no revelation to prove this. It is a matter we all agree upon—a matter of personal experience. We are not, and most likely shall not be, called on to suffer imprisonment, torture, and death like the Apostles and the early Christians, but still our lives are lives of continual crosses and sufferings.

Our bodily constitutions are continually bringing them on us. Every member of the body may be a source of pain. We have rack-ing headaches, distressing coughs, lassitude, sleeplessness, rheumatism, and a thousand ailments to make life a burden. We are exposed to much discomfort from outside ; in the winter from the cold, and in the summer from the excessive heat. We have rain and storms when we desire pleasant weather. We suffer much from the need of supplying the body with food and raiment. How often a strong feeling of dissatisfaction arises because we have not the food we want, or because it has not been prepared to our liking. Many are crippled in some way, cannot see or hear distinctly, or are

too weak to walk. I mention these things because our lives are made up of little things to a great extent, and because little things are the ones which afford us a great opportunity to lay up treasures in heaven. God values them because they show our love for him, our willingness to be guided by him and to be under his hand. If we see God in all that happens to us and submit to him with all our hearts, he will not ask anything more. "Amen I say to you, if you give a cup of cold water to a disciple in my name, you shall not lose your reward." Besides, if we get a habit of not grumbling or complaining when these little annoyances come on us, we shall be prepared to receive rightly the greater things which must come sooner or later: serious sicknesses, bereavements of those nearest and dearest, loss of property, ingratitude of those we have benefited, loss of reputation—things which naturally afflict us deeply. We shall be enabled to bear all this as Job did, saying: "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

There are two ways of bearing what people call misfortunes: one is the way of the world, without faith, and the other is the way of faith.

The way of the world is usually to be much disturbed and to give way to complaint and impatience; to call God to account for allowing

the thing to happen. Sometimes this goes so far as to lead to despair and the taking of one's life. Another way is to plunge into some kind of dissipation, in the endeavor to forget the trouble. It is a life of unhappiness. One is conscious more or less of being wrong and in opposition to God, whom he knows he is under obligation to obey, and this destroys his peace of mind. "There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God."

The way of faith is entirely different. When trouble comes the first thought is of God. He has allowed it. That is enough; that thought is enough, it overrides every other thought. God loves me, whether I am sensible of it or not—that is my faith. I believe, though I cannot imagine nor understand, and therefore all I have to do is to accept. It is hard to nature; I must pray, then, for patience. But I know and am sure that it will work out for me a good result. It will make my salvation more sure, and be for my eternal joy. I shall soon congratulate myself in heaven, and be most thankful to God for having sent me this trial. This quiets the soul and enables it to bear it with tranquillity, and even with joy. This trial passes away and leaves no sting behind, but, on the contrary, joy and satisfaction, so much having been gained by it. Let us ever bear in mind the words of the text:



“A little while, and you shall not see me : and again a little while, and you shall see me ; and your joy no man shall take away.”

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## THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT.

*(Fourth Sunday after Easter.)*

I have yet many things to say to you : but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, he will teach you all truth.—*St. John xvi. 12, 13.*

WE must love God supremely—that is, with all our hearts, and all our minds, and all our souls, and with all our strength ; because he is what he is : the Supreme Good and our Supreme Good, our Creator, our Preserver, our Redeemer, and our last end—we may say, everything to us. This love is what we call appreciative ; not a mere love of feeling, like the love we bear to one another, but a love grounded on our knowing and understanding what God is, and desiring sincerely to behave toward him as he deserves and as we should. We may not always have the feeling of love which we desire, but we must have the conviction ; and God will accept our good will, and give us the feeling when he sees fit ; and if he does not, he will be just as pleased with us as if he did, and perhaps much more so.

The Apostles had this good will, but they were, at this time, imperfect, and they had not a clear perception of spiritual things. They loved our Lord very greatly, for he was most amiable, and they were profoundly grieved at what he told them that he was to suffer and die. Therefore our Lord said that, although he had much to tell them, it was not the time for it, but that the Spirit of Truth, which he would send them, would teach them all truth. And this was fulfilled shortly after at Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended upon them. They were then different men, understanding fully what Christ had taught them and ready even to lay down their lives for the faith.

This Spirit of Truth is the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, God himself, who came upon the Apostles, and who dwells in the heart of every Christian in the state of grace.

Why does he dwell in us? What is his office? To lead us to our salvation, to the gaining of our last end; to call to our minds all the truths of the faith which we have been taught, and which we might otherwise forget, or which might be crowded out of our minds by the business and cares of this life—to enforce them and make us attend seriously to them; to reprove us and terrify us when we

think of doing anything wrong ; to encourage us when we do anything for the love of God ; to console us when we are afflicted and down-hearted ; to carry us safely through this mortal life and land us in our true country of heaven.

He is called the Sanctifier, and it is his office to implant and cause the true love of God to grow in us. The Holy Ghost dwells in our hearts, and is incessantly occupied in teaching us the truth. He is imparted to us in Baptism. In the exorcism of the evil spirit we say : " Depart from him, accursed spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost, the Comforter." And the Scripture says : " You are the temple of God, and the Holy Spirit dwelleth in you." Our Lord says : " If you keep my commandments, my Father and I will come and dwell with you"—*i.e.*, the Holy Spirit will be with you.

As the Spirit proceedeth from the Father and the Son, wherever the Holy Spirit is there is also both the Father and the Son. What a wonderful and glorious thought it is that God is always with us when we are in a state of grace, that every good thought is inspired by God ! When such a thought comes into our minds it may seem to us to be our own, and merely the working of our own reason ; but it is not so, it is God Himself speaking

to us through our reason. It is a solemn thought, also, that if we neglect such good inspirations we are shutting our minds against the divine influence and making little of the Holy Ghost. As the Scripture says: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you: but if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy"; a consoling and encouraging thought that it is not the mere dictate of our own reason that we obey when we do right, but the voice of God within us. That if we earnestly desire to follow God's will in all things, he will guide us himself and direct all our thoughts and words and actions to the right end. We can comprehend this by a comparison. Suppose we had a wise and loving friend living with us, to whom we could go on all occasions and get his advice, and we were disposed to follow it, we can see how securely we could live. Well, God the Holy Ghost is that infinitely wise and good friend who is ready to advise and direct us, so that if we listen to his voice we cannot go astray.

As little children we receive the Holy Ghost in baptism, and become heirs of the kingdom of heaven. So if we die before we come to the use of reason, we go to heaven; but if we live longer, and our reason develops and unfolds, we are taught the truths of the faith,

and the Holy Ghost is constantly reminding us of them and makes us deem them most important. Our Lord taught the Apostles himself, no doubt, completely, but they did not take in this full meaning; therefore he said, the Holy Ghost "will teach you all things, and bring all things to your minds whatsoever I have said to you." In the same way the Holy Ghost will recall to us what we have been taught, and impress us with the idea that this knowledge is more to us than all other knowledge. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away."

The Holy Ghost speaks to us through the mouths of others, and through what we read in the Bible, the written Word of God, and in the lives of the saints and in pious books. How often when we hear a sermon a deep impression is brought home to us, to change the whole course of our lives! When St. Anthony heard the words, "Go sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and take up thy cross and follow me," it filled his heart with such an ardent flame of devotion that he went out at once and sold his property and distributed it to the poor, and went into the desert to spend the rest of his life in communion with God. On the missions many have at once, hearing the eternal truths, forsaken lives of sin and become most devout and

attentive Christians until they passed into eternity.

In another way the Holy Spirit teaches us, and that is in the events of life, in all that happens; for God rules all things and intends them for our good. "To them that love God all things work together unto good." How many are there who when they enjoy good health and feel strong, and are prosperous, forget God and rely upon themselves, and act according to their own good pleasure, as if they had a right to do as they pleased, violating God's commandments without hesitation. Proud, vainglorious, impious, they go along with a high head, but lo! an attack of sickness comes suddenly upon them; they are brought low and death stares them in the face. There is no help from medicine. Now they begin to realize what they are—utterly helpless, their pride and self-sufficiency have to come down; they recall God's promises, they call on him for help, they promise amendment, they attend to the voice of the Holy Ghost, seek pardon, and are forgiven and become humble Christians. "Before I was humiliated I went astray; on account of it I now keep thy commandments." Another meets with unexpected losses or disappointments; things go wrong with him, and this makes him realize that a higher power governs human affairs and that

this world affords no solid ground to rest upon, but that our real treasure must be in heaven and not on earth.

St. Alphonsus was a most promising young lawyer. An important case was entrusted to him, and he was quite certain he would gain it; but, by divine permission no doubt, he overlooked an important point and lost it. This disappointment opened his eyes and he saw the emptiness of human glory, abandoned the world and devoted himself entirely to God's service, and became the great saint that he was.

The death of friends and near relatives is a means of the Holy Spirit of Truth to wake us up. Who can gaze on the pallid face of a corpse, and not see that if we gain the whole world and do not save our own souls, it is absolute loss—nothing whatever of profit to us? I remember that when a young man the news of the sudden death of a companion who was dear to me affected me so that the very ground I walked upon appeared to me not to be solid, but only something imaginary. And in many other ways which cannot be described God the Holy Spirit turns us away from sin back to God; making us dissatisfied with this world—we can hardly tell why, but longing for something more solid; for the grace of God, which alone can satisfy us. As St.

Augustine says: The human soul is always restless, until it can find its rest in God.

Without the grace of God—that is, the influence of the Holy Spirit—we can do nothing. But God is always ready to give us his grace; all he requires is that we should ask for it. Let us pray, then, and form habits of prayer, and God will give us grace abundantly, and the Holy Spirit will teach us effectually all truth, and guide us to our final destination in heaven.

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## THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

*(Fifth Sunday after Easter.)*

For he that hath looked into the perfect law of liberty, and hath continued in it, not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work; this man shall be blessed in his deed.--*St. James i. 25.*

ST. JAMES speaks of a man looking into the perfect law of liberty—*i.e.*, the Gospel of Christ. How does this happen?

We will suppose he is in sin and out of the grace of God. This grace of God is always at work in the soul to reconcile us to God. It will not allow one to be at peace in sin. The sinner feels unhappy. His sins, which gave him pleasure, lose their charm.



He is disappointed in his expectation. Instead of a joyful and happy life he finds himself miserable. His conscience upbraids him. He knows he is on the broad road that leads to destruction; that he has separated himself from God, and fears the final sentence which will be pronounced upon him at the last day. He says to himself: How shall I get out of this unhappy condition?

Now he thinks of what the faith has taught him. That God is the infinite Goodness, and loves him. That he so loved the world that he sent his only Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to become a man and to suffer and die on the cross, in order to redeem us from our sins. He sees that if he turns away from his sins and will keep the commandments, there is nothing to hinder him from being forgiven and made a child of God once more. He reflects on all this, and a struggle takes place between his sins and his hope of forgiveness. He looks into the law of liberty; the more he looks into it, the more he desires it. This makes him pray, and do it earnestly, and divine grace completes the work in his soul. He resolves to go back to God. He prepares himself by examining his conscience, by many aspirations and prayers and good resolutions, for his confession, and receives absolution.

He has looked into the law of liberty, and means to continue in the same until the end of his life.

The Gospel of Christ is indeed a perfect law of liberty, because it frees us from the slavery of sin. Our Lord says: "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Do we not all know that by our own experience? When the temptation to sin presents itself our better nature, our right reason, revolts against it. We say to ourselves: No, I must not do that; it is not right. I shall lose God's grace if I do. I shall put myself in the power of my worst enemy if I do. Then the temptation comes up again; presents itself in enticing and alluring colors, and sometimes a long struggle goes on before we can be persuaded to do this evil thing. After it is done we feel that we have been overcome and vanquished by our enemy. We have put a master over ourselves. And what kind of a master? Some base and degrading passion. We would not have God, the infinite Wisdom, for a master; and we now have the devil and our own unruly, ungovernable passions for a master.

When we have formed a habit by repeated sins, we are slaves indeed; our freedom is all gone. Do we not see what tyrants the horrid passions of drink, or impurity, or covetous-

ness are, dragging us down to the gulf of degradation and despair?

The Gospel of Christ is the only law of freedom. It liberates us from past sin which fetters us, and restores peace and courage to the soul. How happy a man is when he has confidence that he is forgiven!—like the slave when his fetters are knocked off. Sin then loses its charm, and the grace of God appears very lovely, and desirable above everything else.

The gospel not merely liberates us from past sin, but it frees us from the danger of sin for the future. The law of God is opposed to everything evil or injurious to us. If we observe it and continue in it, it breaks the power of temptation, and frees us from the danger of yielding to it. Then we are free indeed. Then we can do just what we please, because we can never be pleased to do anything wrong. We find all our joy and happiness in doing the will of God.

But you may say: Father, I have been a great sinner, and I am in consequence severely tempted. I am not freed from temptation, but I have to fight my enemies, and they seem to me very strong. Very true; these enemies are strong, but the grace of God is stronger yet. As St. Paul says: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted

above that which you are able, but will make also with the temptation a way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

The resurrection of Lazarus from the dead is a figure of this. Lazarus dead and in the tomb represents the soul dead in sin. Our Lord comes and calls in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth"; and Lazarus rises from the dead and comes forth. So the soul dead to God's grace at the voice of God comes to life again. The sinner who was sunk deep in sin comes back to the life of God.

When Lazarus came forth he was bound hand and foot; our Lord then said, Loose him and let him go. So when the sinner long in sin is called back to life, he comes forth bound hand and foot. God does not merely say to him Come forth, but also, Loose him and let him go. He forgives him and gives him liberty of action. What he could not do of himself God will do for him. The gospel is, then, the perfect law of liberty.

But St. James says: We must *continue* in it, and not be a *forgetful* hearer, but a doer of the work.

Is it not astonishing that any one can look into the perfect law of liberty seriously, and ever be forgetful afterwards? Yet such is the case. How many start out on this great business of life and seem to make good progress

in it, and then fall away and lose all fervor. Why is this? Because they neglect to attend to it. No man will succeed in his business unless he does this. The merchant who lets his affairs go as they will and thinks merely of his ease and pleasure, will soon come to grief. The professional man who will not study up his cases will soon lose his practice. Salvation is a business, and the only real and great business of our lives. We must attend to it. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do."

The world is all around us with its multitude of little affairs, and its worries and troubles, and its pleasures and allurements. One thing after another comes up and fills the mind. If we do not look out our time and our thoughts will be all occupied, and all thoughts of God and the soul crowded out and forgotten. The way we forget a thing is by not thinking of it at all. If we do not make a business of thinking of the law of God it will likely be forgotten.

The Church, our Mother, tells us how not to forget the business of our lives. She stimulates us to pray; to say our daily prayers morning and evening; to attend Mass, and do it rightly by reflection and prayers, not idly or listlessly. She provides the confessional

to wash off the stains of sins and renew fervor, and the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist to give us life and strength. She exhorts us to read good books—the Bible and other spiritual books; to avoid bad company and occasions of sin. If we make use of these means there is no danger of forgetting.

If we do not want to forget and cease to be a doer of the work, we must look into not merely the law of liberty, but the perfect law of liberty; not be satisfied with the letter of the law, but aim at fulfilling it in its spirit. Our Lord explained this in the Sermon on the Mount. The law says literally: *Thou shalt do no murder*; but I say unto you, *he that hateth his brother is a murderer in his heart*. *Thou shalt not commit adultery*; but I say that *he that looketh on a woman to lust after her, committeth adultery in his heart*. *Love your enemies, etc.*; do good to those who speak evil of you. No: the perfect law of liberty is to love God with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. It is to make it our business to seek earnestly what is God's will in all the circumstances of life, and to endeavor to comply with it as fully as possible.

Then we are indeed free men. Nothing can hurt us; nothing can disturb us. All things whatsoever then work together for our good.

What folks call calamities and misfortunes and sorrows are not evils any longer. All these things unite us more closely to God, more even than things which are joyful and prosperous. As St. Paul says: "For I am sure that neither life nor death, nor angels nor principalities, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

With these sentiments we shall never be separated from our chief and only Good either in time or eternity.

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## THE PRACTICE OF HOPE.

*(Sunday in the Octave of the Ascension.)*

Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, so shall he come as you have seen him going into heaven.—*Acts i. 11.*

OUR Lord remained forty days on the earth after his resurrection from the dead. Then he ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olivet in the presence of his Apostles. He stood there conversing with them. One of them asked him: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered

that they should bear testimony to him in Judea and throughout the world. Then he arose from their midst into the air, higher and higher, until he disappeared from their sight. They stood gazing into heaven as if they would bring him back again to the earth. Suddenly two men in bright raiment appeared before them and spoke the words of the text. The Apostles then understood that they should see Jesus no more on this earth ; that they had taken a final farewell. The Gospel tells us they returned rejoicing with great joy to the city of Jerusalem.

Why did they so rejoice? Men do not rejoice at the death of their most loved friends. When they finally separate from them they grieve and lament. The Apostles rejoiced because their souls were filled with hope. They thought of Jesus returning in glory. They thought that as he ascended, so should all his faithful friends ascend into heaven also. The ascension is especially the festival of hope, and it seems to me most appropriate to speak of this virtue of hope to-day. I shall say something, first, of its importance in the life of the Christian, and second, of the practice of it.

There are three grand virtues, called the "theological" virtues because God is the immediate object of them. They are faith, hope, and charity. They are intimately connected



and depend on one another. Of the virtue of faith much is said : of making frequent acts of faith, of living according to the faith, of sins against faith, and much else ; so also of charity, the perfection of virtues. The whole of Christian perfection deals with this virtue, and books are written in abundance showing how to acquire it. But it seems to me comparatively little attention is paid to hope ; yet it is of the utmost consequence in the work of our salvation.

Hope is a divine or supernatural virtue by which, with a sure trust, we expect from God the reward of eternal life, and also all the means now necessary in order to attain it. The ground of this hope is the *truth* of God, who cannot deceive us or be wanting in the fulfilment of his promises. This virtue is infused into the soul at baptism, as the seed is planted in the ground. Now, we know that when the seed comes up it must be cultivated. The gardener digs around it, waters it, manures it, labors upon it until it acquires strength and becomes a great plant. So this little germ or seed of hope planted in the soul will come up as our reason develops. Then we must cultivate it ; we must strengthen it ; must exercise it, until it flourishes, until it becomes a powerful and efficient principle in the government of the soul.

It is hardly necessary for me to point out the importance of this virtue of hope in the business of our salvation. We know the nature of it. It is the parent and cause of cheerfulness ; of joy, of a patient perseverance in difficulties, of an untiring activity in good works.

Take the hopeful man of the world—he is also a cheerful man. There is a light in his eye and a smile on his face. Every one is glad to see him. He has plenty of friends who love him and delight in his society. When the hopeless and despondent man comes along, on the contrary, his friends are glad when he goes away and leaves them alone. The hopeful man perseveres patiently in labor. If things go wrong he does not give up so easily. He says : “ They will come right by and by ; I will not give up yet.” If he fails entirely, he turns to something else. He says : “ Never mind ; if one thing does not succeed, another will ; better luck next time.” Such a man accomplishes a vast deal. He does more than a dozen of a contrary disposition. His life is one of a cheerful activity. He is not aware himself of what he has done already. This is the effect of hope in the natural order. Every one knows and understands it well.

*It is the same in the order of salvation.* The virtue of hope produces religious cheerfulness

and joy. The Christian full of hope is full of a holy joy. He recommends religion by his face; he makes others long to enjoy that calmness and joy they see him enjoy. He does not present that repulsive and gloomy appearance of some Christians deficient in hope, which makes religion so repulsive to people of the world. Hope makes him not only cheerful but patient; not easily discouraged under difficulties, but looking forward hopefully to the future. There is no such word as failure in his vocabulary, and he has this advantage over the merely natural man. Men fail in temporal undertakings, but the Christian need never fail. If he fails in the things he sets out to do, he does not fail in doing God's will, which is the main thing he proposed after all. Hope, then, produces an unceasing activity in good works and merits. The Psalmist describes it well: "For I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications for ever—*propter retributionem*—for the sake of the reward" (Ps. 118-112). This hope of eternal reward it is which has inspired the saints to do heroic things. They said to themselves, "For the sake of the reward." What is the reward? Nothing short of God Himself—his eternal glory and happiness. I am sure of attaining it, for he is faithful who has promised. If I am faithful myself there can be no failure on

his part. But shall I not lack the means? No, for the Truth which has promised the end has promised all the means necessary to attain it. Christ's disciples felt, through this hope, inclined to devote themselves to God in all things and at all risks, and never to recede from their determination. St. Gregory remarks aptly of hope: "Whatsoever thy foot treadeth upon that shalt thou be master of. Thy foot which treads is hope, for whatever we hope that we shall attain to."

St. Paul calls this hope the *helmet of salvation*: "For let us, who are of the day, be sober, having on the breast-plate of faith and charity; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation" (I. Thess. v. 8). It is a beautiful figure. The soldier wore the helmet on the head. It was made of strong steel, capable of resisting any blow. Hope is the helmet of salvation because it can resist the most violent blows directed against us by the enemies of our souls. We have trials—heavy ones, too, oftentimes—afflictions and temptations. The present we cannot change. It will be as God has willed it. We must fly from present trouble to the future—to God, who is our hope; to Heaven, which is our rest; to the grace of God and the Sacraments and prayer, which are the means provided. We rely on hope. Hope repels all these difficulties. We can exclaim

in hope, as Job did, "Though He slay me, I will trust in Him." So it was with St. Anthony. Alone in his sepulchre, beaten by the demons until he lost consciousness, in the dead of night, when he came to himself, he cried out in a voice of hope: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Hope is also called the anchor of the soul: "to hold fast the hope which is set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul" (Heb. vi. 18). We need a sure anchor, drifted about as we are in the storms and troubles of this life. The seaman in the storm when he drifts near the rocky coast is in imminent danger of death by shipwreck. He has no resource but to cast anchor. Lucky for him if it holds. Then the vessel brings up, she stops drifting; she is safe. What joy fills his heart! It matters little if she tosses about, if it is cold or wet; he thinks that the next day better weather will come and he will sail prosperously on his voyage. Hope is a sure anchor. It will hold. God is what it reposes upon, and he is immovable. "In thee, O Lord, have I trusted; I shall never be confounded."

How great, then, is the value of a lively hope to the soul! It is its life, its spring, its animation. It is the producer of the most

ardent charity ; for the hope of enjoying the goodness of God and being participators in his glory necessarily makes us love the author and cause of this goodness. We must excite, then, ever more and more this hope in the soul. Alas ! some seem to have little appreciation of this sublime virtue. They seem to think it useless to hope, and a virtue rather to hang on the borders of despair. Why is this ? Perhaps it is because of the pleasantness and sweetness of hope. Their idea of religion is that it must all be harsh and disagreeable. There is no virtue except where there is pain. It seems to them more humble to deprecate always the wrath of God, and to regard themselves as lying under it. This is a mistake. Hope occupies itself with what is agreeable, but it is as meritorious as any other virtue. God intends to afford us pleasure in the exercise of every virtue. In loving him there is a great pleasure. Could we realize it, there would be no greater here on the earth. So in loving our neighbors, in assisting them in their troubles, there is a pure and refined pleasure. There is pleasure in doing good, and what is true in general is true of hope. God will reward it. He has commanded it and requires it, and we must practise it to conform to his will.

Hope is also an arduous virtue. It requires exertion and effort. We have never seen God ;

we have never seen heaven; its joys are all promised and are ahead of us. The present trouble presses us. Hope is often hard to exercise, and we labor hard in the Lord's vineyard when we practise it. Especially is this the case with some particular persons. They are melancholy and gloomy by disposition. They look on the dark side of things. "Oh, will the Lord ever forgive my sins?—they were so grievous." But have you done penance for them? "I have done my best." Then put away these idle fears. You only lose your time with them; you only destroy the love of God in your soul. God is a father, not a tyrant. By your constant distrust you make God more vindictive and cruel than you would be willing to believe anybody here on earth could be. Remember these words: "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and shall do what is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive"; and drive these distrustful thoughts from your soul as your worst enemies.

"Oh, who can keep the laws of God and live a life pleasing to God?" says another. "It is so hard." And there is all the time no difficulty worth speaking of in the way. The duties of life are plain, they are easily executed, and only a little attention and a little confidence in God would make all easy

and delightful. Such persons are like the servant who hid his lord's talent in the ground, and said, "Lord, I knew thou wast a hard master," when he could have obtained at least the interest of the money without any trouble worth speaking of. Away, then, with all this idle complaining and want of confidence! Not a cup of cold water can be given in charity and the reward be lost.

Let us all, then, practise greatly this divine virtue. Entertain our hearts often with the thoughts of heaven and the other objects of hope. In all times of trial especially, instead of desponding, have recourse promptly to God for help. We cannot help ourselves, but God can help us. Let us say, "In thee, O Lord, I have trusted; let me never be confounded." Make short work of it, putting away as temptations all thoughts of distrust.

In our troubles and trials let us call in at once hope. Let us put to flight all dark and melancholy thoughts, and throw ourselves on the goodness and sure promise of God. Let us again and again do so until we are re-established in hope.

But let us be careful to have a good foundation for hope. That foundation is a good life, a sincere disposition to serve God. We have no right to hope without this. For a man to hope in the goodness of God while he means



to continue in sin is presumption and false hope. It leads to despair. When this foundation is laid any one may hope—the worst sinner may hope. He can say: “I have sinned, but I will sin no longer. I am sorry for my sin.” The heavenly Father will surely embrace such an one, give him the kiss of peace and clothe him with the robe of charity, which is the grace of God. How can sinners remain in sin when such a glorious hope of God’s love is ever before them? They shall be inexcusable indeed, at the day of account, for trampling under foot deliberately and persistently such a mercy.

Let the sinner, then, hope for pardon; let the pardoned hope for perseverance; let us all hope for great increase of God’s love in our souls; and say, with St. Paul, “Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the supernal vocation in Christ Jesus.” Amen.

## THE COMING OF THE PARACLETE.

(*Pentecost.*)

But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I shall have said to you.—*St. John xiv. 26.*

WE celebrate to-day the visible and public fulfilment of the promise of our Lord to his Apostles. He promised them, that after his departure into heaven he would send them the Holy Ghost to abide with them for ever, to comfort and instruct them. The Holy Ghost was to come, not merely for their own individual comfort and instruction, but for the comfort and instruction of those who were to come after them; that is, he was to perform in the Church an abiding and permanent office. It was, therefore, fitting and right that the coming of the Holy Ghost should be in a public and wonderful way, so as to be known by the whole world.

“Now, when the days of Pentecost were accomplished and the disciples were all assembled together, there came suddenly a rushing sound as of a mighty wind, filling the whole place, and tongues of fire appeared and sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak of the wonderful things of God,” as the Scripture

expresses it, in all the languages of the known world.

The Holy Ghost, then, came in the most public and extraordinary manner to discharge his office in the Church of God ; and to inquire what that office is, and then what consequences flow out of this, will be the subject of my discourse.

The Holy Ghost came to stand to the Church in the same relation that the soul stands to the body. He came to direct and govern the Church, just as the mind directs and governs the body of any one of us. The Holy Ghost is the principle of life in the Church of Christ.

There are two ideas we can form of the nature of the Church. One is that it is an association of the faithful, in which each one brings in his own share of learning, piety, and good sense, and that it has no life or power of its own distinct or above what the individuals bring into it. It is an association with a government established for the sake of good order ; but its judgments and decisions, although entitled to great respect on account of the wisdom of the men who make them, still do not bind the conscience of the individual, because whether the rulers in the Church are one or many, they are only fallible men liable to err like any one else, and the fountain cannot rise higher than the source. The Church, according to this idea,

is like a company which men form for the transaction of business, a banking or an insurance or railroad company. Such companies are properly said to have no souls—soulless corporations. Such companies have no consciences as companies, independent of the individuals composing them, nor reason, nor judgment. And so the Church, considered as a mere aggregation of the wisdom and judgment of individuals, cannot be said properly to have a soul. That this is the idea of a great many in respect to the Church is quite evident; they disclaim all binding authority of the Church over their consciences; they say, I pin my faith to no church. They say, with all due respect my opinion in this is different from that of the Church, or I interpret the Scripture for myself and allow no body of men to do it for me. The Church, in their idea, is simply a body of men.

The other idea of the Church is quite different. It is that the Church of Christ is an organized body, with a real soul and life of her own distinct and above that of the individuals who compose her. What are called organic bodies are those which have a principle of life of their own; as, for example, a plant or tree, the seed from which it springs having a force and life that keeps exerting itself and making the tree grow, until from the little seed it expands

so that it overshadows the house, and produces flowers or fruits in abundance. So it is with the human body; the principle of life in it makes the infant grow into the man, and produces an infinite variety of actions suited to all the different stages of life. This soul is invisible, we cannot see it; but it is more than the body which we can see, for the body might have all its parts, and be all perfect and uninjured, each in its place, and if the breath of life, the soul, is not in it, it is dead after all, and cannot perform its functions. The Church is regarded as a body of this sort; besides its outward organization, it has a principle of life of its own as a Church which enables it to carry out all the objects our Lord had in establishing it. This idea of the Church is the true one, and the other one is false, as I will show to you.

The Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles at Pentecost, and we may well ask the question, What for? The text answers this question: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your minds whatsoever I shall have said to you." The Holy Ghost came down, then, to teach and to keep in mind the teaching of Christ. Now, there is only one more question to ask, How long was the Holy

Ghost to perform this office? The answer is, for ever and always: "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever—the Spirit of Truth."

The Holy Ghost came down, then, on Pentecost to exercise a permanent and abiding office in the Church—and that office was to teach all truth. "When he the Spirit of Truth is come he will teach you all truth." The Holy Ghost is, then, the life and soul of the Church, because he came on purpose to exercise the functions of a soul to the Church—to teach all truth; and it is truth which is the nourishment of souls, and the Church is appointed to nourish our souls for heaven. St. Augustine expresses it well: "For what the soul is to the body of a man, that the Holy Ghost is to the body of Christ, which is the Church. What the Holy Ghost does in the whole Church, that the soul does in all the members of one body." And he goes on: "Paul the Apostle says, One body, one spirit, as the members of that body. The body is made up of many members, and one spirit quickens them all. Behold by the spirit of a man, by which I myself am a man, I hold together all the members. I command them to move; I direct the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the tongue to speak, the hands to work, the feet to walk. The offices of

the members are divided, but one spirit holds all in one. Many things are commanded and many things are done ; but there is one only who commands and one only who is obeyed. What our spirit—that is, our soul—is to the members, that the Holy Ghost is to the members of Christ, to the body of Christ, which is the Church. Therefore the Apostle when he had spoken of the one body, lest we should suppose it to be a dead body, says: There is one body. I ask is this body alive? It is alive. Whence? From the one Spirit. ‘There is one Spirit.’”

If the Church is a mere human society, with no life and no soul of its own, then the Holy Ghost would not have come down at Pentecost to be the perpetual teacher and overseer of the truth. If the Church is soulless, then she cannot be called, as she is in Scripture, “The Pillar and the ground of the truth.” If she is human, she is not “the Church of the living God.” The Church of God, then, is a body—called the body of Christ—made up of chief pastor, pastors of different grades, and people, joined together in one body ; and this body is quickened and made alive by its soul, which is the Holy Ghost, the Divine third Person of the Blessed Trinity, God Himself.

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit which quickens, which presides, governs, superintends,

oversees, and directs the body which is the Church. From this it follows that the Church must be infallible and precluded from error. Why? Because the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth, and he presides over and directs the teaching of the pastors of the Church. Their teaching is the teaching of the Holy Ghost. "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, . . . shall teach you all things, and bring to mind all things whatsoever I have taught, and he shall abide with you for ever."

To explain this a little more particularly: Something contrary to Christ's teaching, a false opinion contrary to the truth, arises in somebody's mind. This person thinks it right and important, and defends it with great ingenuity and learning, and gets a good many to coincide with him. But the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, is with the great body of pastors and the chief pastor, and he influences their minds so that they shall not give in to this error. The Holy Ghost recalls to them the teaching of Christ which has always been received in the Church, the error is clearly pointed out and condemned, and the teaching of the Church is accepted because it is the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

It follows from this that every member of the true Church of Christ can rest in entire and full confidence in the teaching of the



Church. The foundation of their confidence is sure and unshakable; it is the Word of God, who cannot deceive: I will send the Holy Ghost to abide for ever and teach all truth. The voice of the Church is not the voice of man, but the voice of God. The Church speaks by no human authority, but by the authority of God. The Church is infallible because the Holy Ghost is infallible. The men are fallible, to be sure; but an invisible Spirit, the Holy Ghost, directs them, and guards them from error.

What a blessing is this! The whole way of salvation is made sure. The road is pointed out so that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein. The Catholic can say in entire tranquillity, O my God, I believe all that thy Holy Church teaches because thou hast revealed it, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived.

The Holy Ghost is the vital force in the Church which makes truth, like the blood, circulate through all the veins of the body, and brings it down to every member of the Church pure and good, that he may be strong and healthful and have the life of the Spirit. We cannot be thankful enough to God for so great a gift as to make us members of this living body animated by His Divine Spirit.

But this is not all the good that flows to us from being in the body quickened by the Spirit. The Holy Ghost came down to dwell in the

heart of each one of us ; not merely to teach what is true in the Church at large, but to urge and impress it upon our hearts, that we may call it to mind and act up to it ; to make us think when we are likely to forget ; to reprove us and make us feel disagreeable when we do wrong ; to threaten us with God's anger, to urge upon us sweet and holy motives to do right. It is the Spirit of God incessantly working upon us to promote and secure our salvation, to increase in us the love of God, and the reward which we shall receive for the exercise of virtue. When a good thought comes into our minds, whence is it ? From the Holy Ghost. If we put it aside and neglect it, what do we do ? Resist the Spirit of God, despise the Holy Ghost. How often God knocks at our hearts, and we refuse him admittance. How often he tells us something, and we turn our backs upon him without giving any heed to him. "The just man lives by faith." What does that mean ? That he pays attention and hears God when he speaks. It means that when anything happens he does not listen to what anger, or avarice, or lust says about it, but what the Holy Ghost has got to say ; *e.g.*, one loses an eye by an accident ; the eye is gone and cannot be brought back ; this person worries and frets, and will not be reconciled in any way to his loss. The Holy Ghost says to

him, God permitted it to happen—the loss was intended for your good, if you will take it from his hand. You reply, I won't do anything of the sort. I will go on complaining and fretting as long as I live. O fools and blind. The God of consolation, the Paraclete, whispers in our souls full, complete satisfaction, the highest, the noblest motive, and we prefer to grovel on, unhappy and discontented, rather than be consoled.

The Holy Ghost is the life of the Church, and he is also the life of each one of us, if we will only let him be, if we will only submit to let him rule and teach us. He sits in our souls as the Lord in his own temple, and if we would only quiet ourselves and still the noise and turbulence of petty, temporal, perishing things, and affairs which occupy us and take up our whole attention, he would speak to us and teach us how to practise all virtue and keep out of all difficulties, and to be great friends of God, and great saints, and secure peace in this world and our salvation hereafter.

Let us, then, repeat with our whole hearts, and constantly, the prayer which the Church puts in our mouths this day: O God, who on this day didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Ghost, grant we may be truly wise in the same Spirit and ever rejoice in his consolation. Amen.

## THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

*(Trinity Sunday.)*

For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world : and this is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith.—*I. Epistle St. John v. 4.*

WHO are those who are born of God? All who are baptized into the Church of God. God of his pure mercy and goodness conferred upon us this immense favor without any claim or merit on our part. We were children of Adam, born in original sin and deprived of the sanctifying grace which rendered us fit for heaven ; but through the merits of our Saviour Jesus Christ we received again in baptism that sanctifying grace and were born of God.

We are said to be *regenerated*, or born again, in Baptism—*i.e.*, born of God—most of us when incapable of doing anything for ourselves, when infants, by pure mercy. If baptized when older and capable of reason, we had to come with proper dispositions—contrition for our sins, and a firm determination to keep all God's commandments ; we were born of God then, with a full and lively conviction of God's mercy, and a great determination to correspond to the grace received. This was the case with the converts to the Christian faith to whom St. John wrote. He reminds them that they have been translated from death to life ; that they have been

born of God, and made his children; and he tells them that if they are really in heart and soul born of God, that they will overcome the world; and the same words might be addressed to us, for we have received just as great a favor as they did.

If after receiving baptism we have retained our first innocence and continued to grow in grace, then indeed we are born of God, and we become changed and transformed into the image and likeness of God, and all the trials and temptations of the world have but little power over us and are easily overcome, and all our happiness and joy in this life is in serving God and doing his holy will.

If after baptism we have fallen away and lost God's grace by disobedience and mortal sin, then we are dead as to the soul. But God's grace pursues us and excites remorse and disgust of the pleasures of the world, and impels us to go back to God by repentance; the Holy Ghost breathes a new life into the soul, and we are again born of God in the holy Sacrament of Penance.

Now, gratitude for this favor, and the remembrance of the horrible state we were in, and fear of getting into it again, drive us powerfully to God, and we are truly born of God and among his dearest children. From the fervor of her penance St. Mary Magdalen

is reckoned among the greatest of the saints, and above many who never lost their first innocence. Now, the Apostle, when he says those born of God overcome the world, does not mean that they do so without their own co-operation and faithfulness, but that they have abundant grace to enable them to do it, and that it is their own fault if they do not: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to accomplish according to his good will." And St. John points out the instruments to be used to accomplish this result: "And this is the victory which overcometh the world, your faith."

Faith, then, is the instrument you must continually use to get the victory over the world and all your evil inclinations, and to overcome all temptations.

What is this Faith?

Mankind was in darkness, was ignorant of the most important things to know: why placed here upon earth? what was to become of him after death? what was to be done to avert evil and secure good? A great light shone in this darkness. The Son of God came down to us and made the truth fully known—announced eternal life and taught us how to live so as to attain it. This knowledge is called "The Faith," and in baptism He imparts to us what

is called the Gift of Faith, which inclines us to believe and hold steadfastly to those truths made known to us.

We cannot doubt that Christ came into this world; that he accredited his mission by innumerable miracles, healing all sorts of diseases, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, raising the dead to life, and finally rising himself from the tomb after his crucifixion. Then his Gospel spread all over the world, contrary to all human probability, and His Church has come down to us of this day.

The Faith is not a weak credulity without evidence, but most reasonable, and it is most unreasonable to doubt it. Our Faith is a firm adherence, with God's grace helping us, to this truth, and regulating our whole life in accordance with it: it is necessary for our salvation. "Without faith it is impossible to please him," for in order to come to God "we must know that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those who seek him."

The truths of the faith furnish us with the motive of our conduct, and blessed is the man who keeps the law of his God, who meditates on the law of God day and night; for behold all he doeth it shall prosper; according to this the Apostle says: "The just shall live by faith."

The Council of Trent says that faith is the beginning, the foundation and the root of all

our justification. Out of our faith grows all the other virtues; if destitute of faith, we should neither have hope nor charity, there would be nothing to build the spiritual edifice upon.

Our faith should thus be esteemed as a thing not to be trifled with and flung away, but a treasure it would be the greatest misfortune to lose. To lose one's faith would be like being at sea in a vessel without compass or rudder, beaten about in the utmost anxiety by every wind, not knowing when she would strike the rocks and go to pieces.

When we commit mortal sin we lose charity, but not always faith. It is true mortal sin, especially if often committed, is dangerous to faith and weakens it, but does not always destroy it. Many persons deep in sin still retain the faith. Their faith is what is called "dead," it does not avail them. "Faith without works is dead." This is a most dangerous condition, because such persons are more responsible: he that failed to do the will of the Lord through ignorance shall be lightly punished, but he that knew his Lord's will and failed to do it shall be beaten with many stripes. It seems a dreadful condition to be in to believe in God's truth and yet deliberately act contrary to it, and dreadful must be the judgment of such in the last day. But, on some accounts,



it is better to have faith even in mortal sin than to be without it by our own fault, for then there is more hope through this faith that such persons will arouse themselves, abandon their wicked life, and live in accordance with their faith. In opposition to this "dead" faith is the living faith—the Faith which is made alive by charity. This is the faith which justifies the soul and makes it pleasing to God.

"If I should have faith so that I could move mountains, and have not charity (or love of God), I am nothing." Let not any one say, "I shall be saved because I am a Catholic and believe. I can sin, and it will all come out right." What did our Lord say? "Say not we have Abraham for our Father, for I say that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham"—*i.e.*, true children, who in spirit and in truth are the children of Abraham, whether descended from him or not.

To have a lively faith we must have charity, or keep God's commandments and lead a truly virtuous life. Nothing will make faith more lively. "He that doeth the will of my Father in heaven, the same shall *know* of my doctrine whether it be true or not."

Prayer is also one of the best means. Raising the soul to God, which is prayer, draws down God's grace, which makes faith like a live coal of fire.

Sincere acts of faith made expressly also strengthen and animate this virtue.

Reading and meditating on the life and sayings of Christ are the very best means, for his Divinity and his love shine out to every right-minded soul.

Finally: We must not mind a darkness and obscurity attending faith. It must be so, because these truths are so high that, although not contrary to, yet they are above the comprehension of our weak human reason. We bow down, then, before the Divine Wisdom, as the disciples did; when some others went away in their pride, they said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Let us live the life of faith, and we shall overcome the world, and reach safely our destiny in the eternal world which is to come. Amen.

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## HOLY EUCHARIST: THE UNION OF THE SOUL WITH GOD.

*(Sunday in the Octave of Corpus Christi.)*

I am the living Bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever.  
—*St. John ii. 51, 52.*

THE Holy Church has instituted a special festival to commemorate the Blessed Sacrament, and this festival is called Corpus Christi—or the

festival of the Body of Christ. Now, you may ask why has she done this, since we commemorate the institution of the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday with very significant ceremonies, with a procession and with great outward marks of devotion and honor? The reason is that on Holy Thursday we are occupied with the thought of the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we consider the institution of the Blessed Sacrament as one of the incidents of the passion. The splendor and glory of the Blessed Sacrament is only a gleam of light which shines out for a moment from behind the dark cloud of grief and sympathy which should occupy our thoughts at that time. As we can all see, since it is no time for the unmixed joy and the full splendor which the Holy Sacrament demands from us, it was proper that a high festival should be instituted for the pure and unmixed celebration of this great mystery.

And God in his good time brought this about, for he abides in his Church and suggests to her what is befitting for our edification. A devout nun, named Juliana, had a vision many hundred years ago in which she saw the moon shining brightly all over the land except in one spot, which was somewhat darkened; and she was instructed that this dark spot denoted one feast wanting in the Church's course

of festivals—viz., the festival of Corpus Christi. As soon as this idea was thus started it found an answer in all Catholic hearts. The bishop of the diocese where she lived established this festival, and a very few years after the Pope proclaimed it to be observed throughout the whole Church.

Now, what are the objects for which this great feast has been instituted? They are twofold : to make us appreciate more fully the extent of the love of God to us ; to enable us to understand and derive from the Blessed Sacrament more fully the benefits which it was intended to confer upon us. For we have only to give a special attention and reflection to the nature and objects of this Sacrament to be convinced most thoroughly of both these great truths. And the Church would have us devote this festival, and indeed the whole octave, to this consideration. Now, dear brethren, what is God's whole object in all his dealings with us? What but to bring us into union with himself. Oh, what a glorious and magnificent thought this is!—a thought which we could never, it seems to me, be so presumptuous or daring as even to entertain unless God had revealed it to us. What am I? A worm of the earth, made out of the dust of the earth, who a short time ago did not exist, who was called of nothingness and

made into a living soul ; a nothingness in and of myself, who cannot so much as draw one breath or continue in life one instant without a power outside of myself, independent of me, enabling me to do so ; who if he should withdraw his support I should fall back straightway into my original nothingness ; I, now that I do exist, who am so feeble in body and in mind, who cannot comprehend how I think one single thought, who know just enough to know how ignorant I am In short, I, who am a creature, like an animal or a tree or a stone, who only have a brief existence here, subject to disease, misery, decrepitude, old age and death—every way most miserable in myself,—I am to be raised up to a sort of equality with God ; to see him as he is, to understand him as he is, to participate in his perfectly immense and unfathomable perfections ; to become, in some sort, all wise, all good and amiable, all lovely and beautiful, all filled up and completely satisfied, and, as it were, saturated with happiness ; and, in an unchangeable and eternal way, brimful of joy and exultation for ever and ever.

This is our destiny ; this is what God has created us for ; this is what Jesus Christ came into the world and died for. This is a perfectly astounding thought—a thought which grows larger and larger as we become familiar with

it and occupy ourselves with it, until the soul seems to become too little to contain it. And yet it is true; the fulfilment shall exceed our wildest and most exaggerated desires and aspirations.

And the Blessed Sacrament is the witness for the truth of the fulfilment of all this, and at the same time the means of bringing it about. In this most sacred Sacrament we receive into our mouths the real true Body of our Lord Jesus Christ—under an outward and material form as food. The nature of food is to be changed into our flesh and blood. It loses its own substance and becomes changed into our substance. The bread we eat ceases to be bread and becomes a part of our substance, is changed into our blood and our flesh.

What, then, could more clearly indicate to us the perfection of the union intended by the Creator to be effected between us and himself than the Blessed Sacrament? As the substance of bread and wine are changed and converted into our substance in the physical and material order, so in a similar way our souls are changed and converted into the image and likeness of God in the spiritual order, endowing us with, so to speak, divine qualities, with the blessed effects of his infinite glory, perfections, and happiness.

And the Blessed Sacrament not only points

out in a clear way the significance of our union and exaltation with God, but it is also the great means of effecting and bringing it about. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood shall have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him." This is like planting a seed of divinity in us which is to grow up into a big tree. This is like being grafted into a tree, so that the sap or juice goes from the trunk to nourish and give life to the branches. This tree is our Lord Jesus Christ, and the life-blood or sap will flow from this tree into us when we are inoculated or grafted into it by receiving the Blessed Sacrament. His humanity is inseparably joined to his Divinity, so that in receiving the Body of Christ we receive of his divinity also.

On this glorious festival, then, we should enlarge and dilate our hearts, and try to comprehend, as St. Paul says, "the length and breadth and height of the Love of God" to us in this Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

This is the highest expression of the Love of God to us. This love expressed itself in our creation, which was the beginning of our perfection and union with God; again, it ex-

pressed itself in the Incarnation, when the Second Person of the Trinity, the eternal God, condescended to take our flesh and nature, and thus become one of our race, and, so to speak, our blood relation.

Again, it expressed itself in the sacrifice and death upon the cross, by which atonement was made for our sins, and all the obstacles were removed out of the way which could hinder the course of God's liberality. But in the Blessed Sacrament is the beginning of the actual fulfilment; the commencement of our eternal union with God, the foretaste of heaven.

The Church tries, then, to celebrate this feast with the greatest outward splendor. On this day she ordains that the Blessed Sacrament shall be carried in procession, and she brings out all her treasures to adorn it. Banners, rich and costly vestments, all the accumulated treasures of centuries, are brought out to make it splendid. The streets are carpeted with flowers and hung with rich tapestry. Kings and queens and the great ones of the earth bow down in outward token of reverence to one who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. All this is well; it is only befitting that we should do our best to show respect to the Blessed Sacrament. What is it in itself? Nothing to him who is the Lord and Creator of all: he values it, but not for the thing it-



self; it is from the motive which dictates it. If it were mere outward show and not corresponding to an inward sentiment, then it would indeed be an abomination in his sight.

How, then, shall we honor God so as best to please him and thus draw down upon ourselves the inestimable blessings of this Sacrament? God looks at the heart. "My son," he says, "give me thy heart." The heart—that is, the intention, the good will and love—is what he values.

Let us give him that: and first, how shall we do it? By true obedience, being firmly resolved never to commit mortal sin. That one who has made a firm, unalterable resolution never under any circumstances to commit a grievous sin, gives God his heart. He means right; he does not play the hypocrite and say Lord, Lord, when he does not intend to obey his Lord. Oh! let us suffer any loss and detriment so that we may never commit a mortal sin.

With this disposition we can pay God a true homage in this festival and octave of Corpus Christi. How can we honor him still more? By having a truly filial, son-like desire to please him in all things. By sending up to heaven our short prayers, and nourishing a warm desire to be pleasing in all things to our good Father in heaven. By thinking of the life of

our Lord Jesus Christ here on earth, and seeking to imitate his conduct and his ways, as far as they are applicable to our circumstances and state of life. In this way we shall be right pleasing to God and man. God will love us and our fellow-men will love us, because we shall love them with a sure love such as Jesus Christ had for them. What a beautiful, what a peaceful, what a useful life this would be!

O brethren! if you find anything in yourself not right pleasing to God, do not suffer it to continue; set that thing right. Forgive all your enemies for Christ's sake. Be as charitable as you can for his sake; watch your eyes, your tongue, your thoughts, that they may be such as he would approve of.

Thus you will gain all that God of his infinite bounty desires to give you, by your cheerful and loving co-operation with his graces. And thus you will come to the eternal union with him in heaven.

## FRATERNAL LOVE.

(*Second Sunday after Pentecost.*)

Dearly beloved, let us love one another : for charity is of God. And every one that loveth, is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is charity.—*I. John iv. 7, 8.*

THE holy Apostle proposes to us in this text a short and simple way of ascertaining whether we have the love of God or not. He says : Try yourselves, and see whether you have the love of your neighbor in your heart. If you find you have, it is all right : you do love God ; but if you find you have it not, then if you imagine you love God you are grossly deceived : there is no reality in your love, it is a mere sham and a deceit. And he exhorts us with great earnestness to practise the love of our fellow-creatures as a means of acquiring the love of God. Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God, and he that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. Nothing can be of more importance to us in working out our salvation than the practice of this love ; and nothing, on the contrary, more injurious than the want of it.

Why is it that the love of our neighbor conduces so powerfully to the love of God in our hearts ? The holy Apostle gives the great reason for it very shortly : for God is charity.

Now, this is well worth thinking about. We must love our fellow-creatures because God is love. God may be called pure love; he entertains for us a sentiment of pure unmixed love. This infinite love of his flows out upon all his creatures. And God, making us to his own image and likeness, designs that this image shall be made perfect in us and that we should be more and more like him. As we love more, then, we are more like God. We can exercise our free will and power of choice either in loving or refusing love to one another; and just in this way we can either perfect and fill up the lineaments of God in us, or, on the other hand, destroy and deface them. God is love, and it is thus precisely by love that we can become godlike. We may practise other virtues and with great profit to our souls; for example, patience, enduring in peace what our Maker sends upon us, or self-denial in turning away from pleasures which might lead us into sin; and thus render us like unto our Lord, who suffered and was patient; but an act of true fraternal charity seems to make us more quickly and more perfectly godlike than anything else. And so the Apostle also says: "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." Take notice of the last part of this, and knoweth God. We learn to know God in the practice of love, and we cannot know

him without loving him ; and thus, through charity or love, God is born in our hearts.

A person, for example, is unable to realize the goodness and love of God. He is terrified at the idea of God's power and justice, and terror drives out the idea of love. Now he practises an act of pure charity to his neighbor for God's sake ; a delightful sentiment of joy and peace fills his heart. (We cannot practise such charity without a strong sentiment of happiness.) He knows by this that God approves his action of love, that he has rendered himself agreeable to God ; and this approval by God of his love and kindness is a clear proof within his inmost heart that God is not unkindness or sternness, as he imagined, but a pure kindness, a being filled and overflowing with love. Who can doubt, that if we strive to act on the pure principle of love in all our dealings with others that we should come to comprehend in the highest degree that God is pure love ? Yes, he that loveth, knows God by experience and inward perception ; and he that loveth not, is ignorant of what God is ; for God is love, and he knows not what love is, and therefore knows not what He is.

In loving our neighbor for God's sake we are able to give the most striking proof of our love to God Himself. How can we show our love to God ? He is not visibly present :

he is a pure spirit, and only appears to us in and through his works. We cannot exhibit our love to him by kind and tender offices of love, as we can to our fellow-creatures. If our Lord had remained in our midst, it is true we could have shown to him in his humanity these most natural and appropriate expressions of our love, just as St. John and the other Apostles did. We could say with St. Peter, when our Lord asked him, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Our Lord has ascended into heaven and is no longer here; but every one of our fellow-men represents God, and represents our Lord Jesus Christ to us. He is the image and likeness of God. The divine power and wisdom and love shine forth in him, created an intelligent soul as he is by God; showing true charity to him for God's sake—in view of God or remembering that he is God's image—is showing it to God. Indeed, it is showing it in some respects in a more striking way than it would be to show the same sentiment to God personally and visibly present to receive it. If we saw a son on his return from a long absence kiss with affection his parents when he met them, it would be a token of love; but if you saw that son kiss his father's or mother's picture during his absence, you would consider it a much stronger evidence

that he was a true-hearted son. If you had a dear friend in a distant place, whom you had not seen for a long time, and any son or brother or near relatives of his came in your way, you would do your best to show them attention and kindness. You would shake them warmly by the hand, ask them to your house, assist them if they needed it; you would think, "What can I do to show them my love?" And this because they represented to you and stood to you in the place of your friend whom you loved. If you neglected them, gave yourself no trouble whatever on their account; was cold and showed no love to them, would it not be plain that your love to your friend was all pretended and not real? Of course. Now, it is the same in regard to God. If we show a true love to his friends, our fellow-creatures, whom he loves, we show it to him, and he will accept it as the greatest mark of affection to himself. The Apostle speaks very truly and right to the point when he says: "If you love not your neighbor whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen?"; and this consideration becomes stronger yet when we consider the consequences of the Incarnation of our Lord. Our Lord has become a brother to every one of us. He has taken to himself our very nature, our flesh and our blood, our own

sentiments and feelings. He loves each one of us with the love of a brother—far more than any natural brother can love us, because his love is that of a brother who is perfectly pure and holy and good. Every fellow-creature, then, represents our Lord to us in the person of our Lord's brother. When we give to the poor and necessitous, our Saviour declares that he considers it quite the same as if done to himself: "I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; naked, and ye clothed me"; and we say, in astonishment: Lord when did I ever give thee to eat or drink, clothe or visit thee? I recollect nothing of the kind. Why, inasmuch as you did it to even the very least of these, thy fellow-men, you did it unto me.

It was only the other day we had the feast of the great St. Martin, Bishop of Tours. In the lesson of his feast in the Breviary we read that when he was fifteen years old he joined the army, and had nothing but his arms and a cloak to cover him. A poor beggar came by and asked an alms, and Martin had nothing to give him. He thought an instant, took off his cloak, and with his sword divided it into two parts and gave one-half to the poor man, keeping only an equal share for himself. The next night our Lord appeared to him clothed in that very divided garment, and said: "Mar-



tin, the catechumen (he had not yet received holy baptism, but was preparing for it), has clothed me with this very garment."

Another most powerful argument for true fraternal charity is the blood of Christ. What was the meaning of his death on the cross? It was the proof of the love of God. It was to show the height and breadth and depth of this love. And it is the measure of the love, then, that we should bear to our brethren; and so St. John says fitly: "In this we have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." And then consider the magnificent promises and rewards annexed to the practice of charity; it is said to be the proof of our eternal salvation: "In this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." If we love one another, God abideth in us and his charity is perfected in us. What could be more conclusive than this? If we find we are animated by a sentiment of charity towards all our fellow-creatures for God's sake, because we wish to please him, we may rejoice with great joy and possess our souls in peace in the sure conviction that we have the true love of God, and that we have no condemnation to fear; that we have passed from death unto life. This alone ought to be enough to make us desire

with our whole heart and soul to be filled with the spirit of charity to one another.

I desire, then, only to add something about the nature of this charity or love, that we may be sure that we possess that which is genuine, and not a mere counterfeit of it. In the first place, we must love our neighbor not in a mere natural manner, but the motive of our love for him must be God, it must be for the sake of God. And if this is the case, we must allow no exceptions in our love. If we love for the love of God, we cannot love one and hate another. God loves all. He created all; and Christ became man for all and died for all; therefore we must love all. Our Saviour says: "Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you: love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust."

If certain persons are our enemies, we must never be theirs; we must be the enemy of no one. We must cherish in our hearts, no matter what folks may do or say in regard to us, a sincere feeling of good will towards them. It is impossible for us to conceive the injury we

do ourselves when we forget or depart from this principle. We stop the divine operations in our souls, we hinder God from showering his graces down upon us, which he would be sure to do if we cherished charity in our hearts. We break up a heavenly peace and joy, and introduce in their place an infernal discord. And what utter senseless folly it is to refuse to love any one on account of God. The love of God is more valuable to us than all the treasures of this world; it is the pearl beyond all price, which we can buy at a cheap, a very cheap rate indeed, by loving those who are naturally disagreeable to us. The joy which this love of God produces in the heart ought to be enough to override all little mean and low considerations. My enemy has been the means of my losing some little trifling good, but he will be the means, if I overlook that, of furnishing me the sum and substance of all good, God himself. Then, I say, the very idea of loving those who consider themselves my enemies and do not like me, ought to fill my very soul with a rapture of joy. Alas! how many people are in a fog and a mire in regard to this which is so plain. They conceive a dislike (perhaps have some reason for it and perhaps not, it makes no difference); they go on nursing in their hearts this dislike until it becomes a habit with them; they shut up their minds to all the true prin-

ciples of Christianity, and only consider the low and mean views of self-love or worldly honor and human respect. Thus they breathe a deadly and poisonous air, when if they would they could raise themselves out of it into the fresh and pure and serene atmosphere of divine love, where no such meannesses can exist for a moment. If, then, we are tempted to cherish enmity against a neighbor, let us dismiss this neighbor out of our thoughts a little and fix our minds on our Maker. Let us think of his greatness and goodness and love, until we feel inflamed with a desire for them, and can say : " As for me, cost what it may, my God I must and will possess." Then we can safely turn back our thoughts upon this neighbor—for God's love will burn up our hatred. And for the sake of God's love we shall be ready to pray for him and show him every kindness we may be able, and thus merit to increase our love to God.

I will only make one other remark, and that is, that this love of our neighbor being supernatural, or on account of God, the best criterion or proof of its reality is when we have to practise self-denial and do some violence to ourselves in exercising it. If we love those who love us, what do we more than the heathen? If we do good to those who do good to us, any one, without a particle of religion, would be likely

to do the same out of pure self-interest. Such love is suspicious in its very character; we may well fear that it is interested and not pure.

We can, then, show our love to God far better by giving to the poor, rather than to the rich; by helping the weak and the feeble, rather than the strong and healthy. By giving money when we have it, rather than by giving talk and words. As St. James says: "If a brother or a sister be naked and want daily food, and one of you say to them, be ye warmed and filled, go in peace, yet you give them not those things that are necessary, what shall it profit?" Let us practise love to our neighbor then, particularly at the cost of our self-love, being ready to sacrifice our ease and our comfort, our minds and our bodies, our desires and our affections, and, if need be, all things to show a true practical love to our neighbors, and we shall receive our reward from Him who has said: "I say unto you, whosoever shall give even a cup of cold water to one of my disciples in my name, verily he shall in no wise lose his reward." Amen.

## THE LOST SHEEP.

*(Third Sunday after Pentecost.)*

What man among you, that hath a hundred sheep : and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the desert wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he hath found it ?—*St. Luke xv 4.*

THIS parable of our Lord Jesus Christ seems to me to be one of the most beautiful, and at the same time most instructive. It presents to us in the most striking light our misery in wandering away from God, and his exceeding goodness in bringing us back again. To every person who has a spark of good will left in him, it ought to afford the utmost encouragement and delight. The more deeply he ponders over it, the more meaning will he find in it. To those who have forgotten that they have souls, and who live simply and solely for the moment, I suppose these words of our Saviour, or any other that he may have spoken, will fall dead, or be the subject of some trifling remark, and then be dismissed from the mind. Let us consider the meaning of the words of our text.

What is signified by the sheep that is lost ? And who is it that loses it ? God is the loser, and the sheep that is lost is man. The ninety-nine represent those who are in God's grace, and the lost one the one who has forfeited it. It is well to consider what it means to forfeit

the grace of God, or to be lost. God created us ; that is, produced us out of nothing by his almighty power. He created our bodies, which are such wonderful and ingenious machines. He created our souls, which are immaterial and immortal substances. They are immaterial because they can in no way be perceived by the senses ; they cannot be seen or heard or touched ; they give life to the body and move it. At death the soul departs without any one being able to perceive how, and the body goes to decay. The soul is immortal because it is a spirit, without parts and incapable of destruction. God has created man in this way, and as Scripture says, in his own image and likeness. We are created in the image and likeness of God because we have this spiritual and reasonable nature. By force of our nature, then, we are capable of knowing and loving God. And God is not only our first beginning but our last end. It is in him that our true happiness consists, in knowing and loving him. We see and know and admire him in his works, which are displayed all around us. But God has made us capable of a far higher happiness. He has elevated us to a much greater dignity. When our Lord Jesus Christ became a man and took our flesh upon himself, he united the divine and the human natures, and now, creatures as we are, we have become capable of a parti-

cipation of the Divine nature. We are capable of seeing God face to face and of sharing with God his happiness. No words can express the glory and dignity which God has designed for man. This is the meaning of being of the flock of Jesus Christ. Every one in this flock, be he rich or poor, learned or ignorant, unknown or famous, is in the way of an everlasting union with God himself.

We can, from this idea of what it is to be united to God and of his flock, form now an idea of the significance of being lost and going astray from this flock. God has not created man, noble as he is, like a block of marble or of wood, to be so raised and elevated without doing anything on his part. He has assigned him a high destiny, but he has laid down the condition that we must work for it. We must earn it. We must merit it by our conduct. We have given to us a free will, or a power of choosing between good and evil, and our arriving at our destiny will depend on our choice. Man is the architect and builder of his own fortunes. He is the builder likewise of his everlasting happiness or misery. As by industry and good conduct in the relations of this life he acquires respect and the means of living, so by industry and good conduct in regard to pleasing God he must acquire an everlasting life and an unending happiness. If he chooses



good all is right, but if he chooses evil he renounces God and God will renounce him. This idea of responsibility to God, and this fear of God, is so deeply seated in the soul of men that we cannot shake it off. It is called conscience, and rarely is it stifled in even the most hardened. When sickness comes and death stares them in the face, then they acknowledge it and are most anxious to make some amends for their past folly. We see then how man is lost, or how he goes astray. The poor sheep went astray because it had no reason to guide it, and by pure accident; but man goes astray wilfully and deliberately. Man wilfully and deliberately violates important commands of his Maker. Man has the choice of a vile pleasure, or some satisfaction of his passions, on the one hand, and of the favor of God on the other, and deliberately renounces God for the sake of this pleasure. "Father," says one, "I have missed Mass since Easter so many times." Was there any reason for doing so? None whatever. Here God is deliberately renounced rather than that a man should take the little trouble of fulfilling an important command. Another says, "I have been intoxicated a short time after my last confession." Here God is renounced for the pleasure of drunkenness. Oh! how many things of a similar nature might be brought up, in every

one of which God is made naught of, and what is vile and mean preferred to him.

Take many a young man or a young woman just growing up. They have lived in innocence for the most part, and with a little restraint on themselves and a little watchfulness might easily maintain themselves in the same. But as they grow up they seem to be too proud to acknowledge God any longer. Away go all the practices of religion! It is more manly and more womanly to acknowledge no other law than the law of appetite and of passion. It is something debasing to acknowledge any restraint even from God himself. Whence otherwise is this passion for blasphemy and ill-treatment of God's name, and this intolerable swaggering and boasting? Vice and wickedness is a thing to boast of, not to be ashamed of. One is ashamed to go to church, but not ashamed to frequent the bar. One is ashamed to pray, but not ashamed to curse and swear. One is not ashamed to be drunken, one is not ashamed to frequent abandoned company and to indulge in low vice. And not merely the young, but the middle-aged and the old just stepping into the grave are often deliberate renouncers of God for the sake of these horrid vices. They are slaves of the flesh, and live after the fashion of brutes, renouncing God to the utmost of their power. Then take those

who are settled in life : how apt are they to become completely immersed and drowned in worldly things, filled with avarice and grasping, filled with temporal cares and anxieties so that they rarely think of God at all, and frequently violate his laws when they stand at all in their way. The flock of Jesus Christ are those who are united to Jesus Christ in the disposition of their souls, but how these are united to him it is difficult to say. Multitudes are astray ; they are not of his flock. They may come to church, they may listen to the sermons, they may even receive the sacraments, and at regular and stated times too ; but if they deliberately break one important command of God their religion is vain until they repent. They may repeat prayers, say litanies, accompany the Mass ; but it is all sham and falsehood. Keep the commandments ! ought to be shouted in their ears ; nothing will ever stand in place of that. Perhaps some who come to this church and hear me now are astray, and it would be well if they would only recognize their true condition. Without the charity of God we may even give our bodies to be burned, and it would avail us nothing ; and what is this charity ? " That we keep the commandments." St. Paul speaks of the one who is truly a member of Christ as being entirely renewed in the spirit of his mind, and so filled with this spirit

of obedience that it is almost impossible for him to fall away. Such seems to me to be the fundamental idea of a true Christian: one who is joined in his whole will and desire to God and his commandments. Now you know what it is to be astray, and you know, or ought to know, that it is not a comfortable or happy state. If we were brutes and had not an immortal soul, it might answer; but it is not so, and if any one tells me he is satisfied and contented with these transient things and rests entirely in them, I tell him, I do not believe you. You grossly deceive yourself.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ desires nothing so much as the return of the soul who has gone astray and lost the grace of God. The comparison of the parable is very apt: "What man among you that hath a hundred sheep, etc." He appeals directly to our own feelings. When we have lost a valuable thing, we feel bad; our sorrow and grief take us up so completely that, for the time, we forget all that we have. They give us no pleasure, they do not console us, because we do not bestow one thought about them. Our loss is the all-engrossing topic of our minds. That is the sort of desire that our Lord has for our salvation. We do not realize it, but that does not prevent it from being so. Our right reason tells us that it must be so. God is our

Creator ; he made us out of nothing, with all our powers and faculties. Now, it would be strange indeed if he did not love us. We love whatever we have made. What other people may have produced by their skill or labor may be better than what we have made, but we love our own. God loves his own work, and loves man far more than any inferior creature. God loves his work in proportion to its beauty and excellence. He has made man but little lower than the angels, and clothed him with glory and honor. It is the height of folly to suppose that God does not ardently desire our good, since he loves us.

God appreciates the worth of the soul. He understands its vast capabilities, and the immense, boundless ocean of happiness awaiting it. He longs, then, with the yearning of a father over us that we may not come short of it. He is willing to do all that he can, short of forcing our wills, to bring us back when we have strayed from him by sin. He cannot in accordance with his divine attributes force our wills, but he seeks us and shows to us his will in every way. Another most powerful argument to show the intense love of God for our souls, comes from the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ became a man, enduring all our miseries and pains for more than thirty years, and finally died a most pain-

ful death by crucifixion. His sufferings were almost beyond our conception. He had no need to do this. It was entirely voluntary. He suffered because he willed to do so. What motive had he for such conduct? It was to open the gates of heaven to sinners. He undertook then freely this work, because he wanted to secure for us our salvation. This sight of Jesus hanging on the Cross throws, then, the greatest and truest light on the question of our souls. It shows most clearly, on the one hand, the vast importance of their salvation, and on the other, the truest and greatest desire on God's part that we should every one of us be saved.

God loves the soul of the sinner so much that he is represented as forgetting the good who are in no danger, and leaving them in the desert while he seeks here and there, by all means, to bring back his stray sheep to the fold. How does our Lord go after the sinner? Often by infusing a sense of discontent and dissatisfaction in his soul. In the midst of his pleasures and worldly aims he finds himself troubled. He finds he is wonderfully cheated in regard to these satisfactions. They do not fill his soul; he feels that he is made for something nobler and better. He recognizes himself as a fool and a slave of his lowest and meanest appetites, and he wishes with all his

heart he could only be free once more. His conscience is alarmed; he becomes conscious that he is resisting an interior voice calling him to live for what is worth living for. It is the voice of God within him, and he becomes conscious that it is. He is self condemned and acknowledges that he has debased himself. This voice continually cries out to him to amend; to turn about and live once more for God, and in obedience to God. Pleasure ceases to have charms for him, and his soul is filled with the charm of being united once more to God. Jesus Christ has found him, and persuaded him to return once more to his fold.

Sometimes he in his mercy sends misfortune, and makes a man's projects turn out failures. Or he sends death and removes for ever from this world the object of our love, that we may recognize that he is the only permanent good, the only thing to be relied on, the only object worth living for. Has he not spoken within your heart? Has he not sought you out many a time? If you say he has not, it is very strange; I do not and cannot believe you. He has sought you even if you have hardened your heart against him. For you have not the nature of an animal; you have a reasonable soul, and you cannot help thinking of your eternal destiny. God is seeking you even

this moment ; if you do not drive him out, he will tell you now not to ruin yourself, but to reconcile yourself to yourself, and to face your own soul and give an answer to the questions that soul asks you.

Why then resist him? Why not abandon yourself to his guidance? You know he asks nothing unreasonable of you. He asks nothing that your own best reason does not entirely approve. You are already self-condemned for not yielding long ago. He asks nothing hard of you. A few days, or I may say a few hours of labor is not to be spoken of in view of eternal life ; and yet this little trouble, this little mortification, this light labor will be enough to enable you to make your confession—to procure you contrition and pardon, to set you on the way of eternal life ; to restore you to the flock of Jesus Christ. You are inexcusable if you do not return. If you are lost you will eternally deplore your own folly. The goodness of God in warning you, in urging you will be ever before you and burn you like fire. Virtue, love, peace, happiness lie before you on the one hand, within your reach ; on the other, vice, hatred, strife of soul, and intolerable misery. Choose your part. Pray to God earnestly, pray to God continually that you may choose aright. Amen.



## RELIGION A BUSINESS.

*(Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

And he that had received the five talents went his way, and traded with the same, and gained other five.—*St. Matt. xxv. 16.*

I SUPPOSE, my dear brethren, there is not one before me who has not more or less solicitude about the eternal salvation of his soul. We may forget it at times, or the thought of it may be crowded out by a multitude of engrossing occupations ; but it will return upon us, it will at times force itself upon us with an irresistible power. What shall I do that I may possess eternal life? How shall I guarantee myself against the consequences of an eternal failure when that terrible but inevitable thing called death shall come upon me. After all, there is no question so pressing or so important as this to the mind of every reasonable being, and a clear and easily understood answer to it ought to be most acceptable to every one. This is what I desire to give you this morning.

Religion, or the salvation of the soul, is a business. It is *the* business of life. Now, what do we understand by the word “business”? The very word explains itself. It is something we are busy about. Business is

being occupied, being taken up with and employed in anything. When a man says "I will make it my business to attend to that," we understand that he will devote his time and attention to it, and, in short, do all that can well be done to bring it to a successful termination. And again, when we ask a man "What is your business?" and he says I am a dry-goods merchant, or a grocer, or a broker, we understand that this is his chief occupation; that he devotes his principal time to it, gets his living and his wealth from it, and that other things have to stand aside when they come in competition with it. Well, now, just in the same sense is religion the business of a man's life. It is not an affair of minor importance which can be attended to now and then, and left habitually out of mind; it is not an affair which can be put in the background and considered only after everything has been attended to, and when one has nothing else to do; it is not an affair of a few occasional sentimental sighs and half-formed wishes, but it is *the* business of one's life, above and beyond every other business or occupation which can demand our attention.

I do not need to prove this at length; you all know it. The figure of this world passes away and all that is in it, but God alone remains for ever. Every other tie which binds

us to earth may be severed, and *must* be severed sooner or later; but the tie which binds to God remains as close and as strong as it was before.

The simple catechism of the Church contains the most sublime and truest instruction in one short question and answer: "For what was man created? To love and serve God in this world, that he may be eternally happy with him in the next." This is the very end and object of our creation; not eating, drinking, money-getting, love of parents or children, but eternal union with God, is the reason why we exist at all, and without which we should never have been created. It is the chief end of life to unite us inseparably to the source of all good, and therefore it is the chief business of our life to work to that end.

Let us stand by the bedside of one who has neglected the consideration of his God all his life, and who now faces death. How well he realizes this truth; how blank and vacant his life looks to him; all that has engaged his attention has passed by and gone, and he has nothing to show for it! Empty-handed he must appear to give an account of a wasted life. His pet schemes, his darling pleasures, his heap of gold or bills, have all become worthless to him. How he regrets now that he has passed his life in forgetfulness of

God and has laid up no treasures, nothing for the Kingdom of Heaven !

The only answer, then, to the question, "What shall I do that I may have eternal life, or how shall I guarantee myself a happy eternity?" is, Make religion the business of your life. Let it be your supreme care and solicitude.

But in what manner is this business to be transacted? How shall it successfully be carried on? The text furnishes us the answer. A man going into a far country called his servants and committed to them various sums of money, some more and some less. On his return one of them came and said: "You committed five talents to my care. I have traded with them, and have gained five talents more." That is it. God commits to each one of us certain talents and requires us to make a good use of them. What are these talents? Our reason and intelligence, our memory, our understanding and our will, our wealth and education, our time and the various opportunities and chances that offer themselves, our health and strength, our joys and sorrows, our trials and our temptations, all creatures—that is, all the various circumstances and vicissitudes of life; these may be called the talents which God commits to our charge and will require us to give a reckoning for. This is our capital

in trade, just as money is the capital of the man of business. And, according to this, you see we have plenty of spiritual money to carry on the business of our immortal souls. Gold of this sort lies in heaps and piles all around us, if we only knew how to make use of it. No man need complain, and say "I have no opportunity to make a gain for the Kingdom of Heaven."

But how shall we make the proper use of all this spiritual capital? How shall we trade to advantage with the talents God has given us? What is the idea of trade? It is to exchange one thing for another, to buy and sell, to get money for goods. Well, that is just what we must do. We must exchange our opportunities, our business, all things for the love of God. Ask the merchant, "What do you trade for?" He will reply, "To make money." "What do you run about for?" "To make money." "What do you lie awake for?" "To make money." "What are you thinking about the most of your time?" "I must confess it is to make money." If he did not care for making money he would not make a good business man. Now, we must have the idea of getting the love of God all the time in our hearts. So if we are asked, "What are you after?" we should at once say, "The love of God." If we ask ourselves, we should

always be able to say in truth, "The love of God is my first aim." We should be afflicted and grieved at the thought that we love God so little. It should make us move with alacrity and fill us with joy to think we could gain a little more love of God.

With this ardent desire to love God better, we shall not make losing bargains; with it all things can be made to conduce to our advantage. Well, then, in the first place, the intention to do God's will and to please him in all our actions will enable us to exchange them all into the love of God. He looks only at the intention. If that is right, then it pleases him, and draws down grace; if it is wrong, no matter how the thing may appear outwardly, it is hateful in his sight, and draws down his anger. This is far more important than we generally realize. Two men may perform, say, nearly the same actions, live outwardly much alike; yet one may be pleasing to God and increasing in virtue every day, while the other is becoming more and more selfish and estranged from God and separated from him. The one looks to his intentions and constantly rectifies them; the other pays no attention to them, and lets them regulate themselves according to the whim of the moment. If you will grow in God's love, make your intentions often enough and fervent enough

to cover all the principal actions of your lives — and if possible all your actions, no matter how small or trifling they may seem. In the morning offer to God all the actions of the day, and do it with all the fervor you can muster. Do the same at night, and renew the intention during the day—the oftener the better. Business, the care of children, household work, study, even eating and drinking and sleeping and recreation, can all be sanctified in this way. If you are going to do wrong it will stop you; for how can you cheat, or allow yourselves to be in rage or anger, or uncleanness? You cannot offer yourself together with these things to God. When you undertake to do it, your conscience will reprove you and give you no rest until you abandon them.

Now, here is the way of trading your five talents and gaining the other five. You need not go to Africa or Asia; you need not be devoured by wild beasts, as the earlier Christians were in the amphitheatre. Go to your place of business; go home, and there you will find your business of the soul to be transacted with God, and plenty of it. And one pther thing besides. Your afflictions, trials, temptations, troubles, and disappointments—they are all more particularly the money with which you can trade and gain your salvation.

Whence do they all come? You do not wish them, you are anxious enough to get rid of such things, your will is not instrumental in producing them. I will tell you whence they come. From the hand of God. He sends these things upon you. And what is his motive? To secure your salvation, to promote your eternal reward. He has foreseen all these things from eternity in reference to your good, on only one condition—*i.e.*, your good will. If you simply recognize the facts, and submit your judgment and will to the supreme and all-wise decree of God with your whole heart, then you turn everything into good and the love of God. Alas! this is what we often do not do. Something happens contrary to our wishes; we call it a great misfortune, it is a calamity; we do not stop to think, we do not stop to pray. We act first, as if there was no God in the world. We indulge in excessive grief and repinings, we fret and worry. We drag even God up before the tribunal of our own judgment. Why have you treated me so? You are unkind, you are cruel. We drift headlong down the stream of rage and despair. We change ourselves into the image of the fiends of hell. What folly this is! what insanity! I call it insanity, because such a proceeding is completely the contradiction of sound reason and common sense.



If one would only stop a little and reflect, if he would only pray, he would soon understand. The light of faith would shine in all those dark places and illuminate them, and show us clearly the true meaning and bearing of them. These very things would be seen to be the most precious gifts of God to our souls; and instead of separating us from his love, they would confirm us so that all the seductions of the world, or the temptations of the evil one, would not affect us. Let us apply this principle not merely to the great events of life, but to all its little trials and disappointments, and accept them all cheerfully from the hand of our Heavenly Father and Physician. How simple a means of purchasing heaven! How simple a means of turning all disagreeableness into sweetness! Call the life of the true Christian miserable? It is a falsehood. Why, instead of unmitigated, irretrievable loss and misfortune, there is no such thing in his dictionary as misfortune; all his sorrow is turned into joy, right here on the spot. Thank God! thank God! he exclaims with a full heart. Send me more of the same sort, if such be your will; you know much better than I what is for the best. Not my will but thine be done. Misfortunes, self-denial, privations, afflictions, and the like become pleasant, for they are the food of his

soul, and his success in that great business on which he has set his heart.

And in a short time he hears the welcome words: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a *few* things (small and little things); I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

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## RELIGION OF THE PHARISEES.

*(Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

Unless your justice shall abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.—*St. Matt. v. 20.*

WHAT is the Kingdom of Heaven? The first idea of it is bliss and joy unspeakable and imperishable. But of what sort is this inexpressible joy. That we do not know; for eye hath not seen it, nor ear heard it, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive it. We know by no experience what its extent or greatness may be; but we know by faith that it is the joy of God Himself. "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," shall be said to every true Christian at the last day. We shall see God face to face—that is, in his essence; we shall see him as he is. We shall be sharers in his glory and wisdom and omnipotence. We shall be, as it were, Gods; for we shall be united to God in an

inseparable union of heart and will and happiness.

The entrance into the kingdom of heaven is, then, to each one of us of the last importance. We were created to get there, and if we fail to get there we have failed in the great object of our creation. We can never be satisfied anywhere else, and if we fail to reach there our remorse and regret will be an eternal and never-ending one. In this view the words of our Lord, "Unless your justice shall exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, etc.," have a solemn and startling importance. It is as much as to say, Judge yourselves now and see what your condition is, that you may not be judged when it is too late to apply the remedy. Weigh your justice in the scales of the Divine truth and holiness, and see whether it be heavy enough to turn the scale in favor of your salvation. The words of our Saviour are as momentous this day as when they were spoken eighteen hundred years ago.

What was the justice of the Scribes and Pharisees which our Lord speaks of? The Scribes and Pharisees were not men destitute of religion; on the contrary, religion was a large and important element of their lives. We read that they were most scrupulous observers of the law, and they laid great stress on having every jot and tittle of the out-

ward observance of it fulfilled. We find them finding fault with our Lord because he healed the sick on the Sabbath day, and they regarded him and his disciples as profane men who violated the sanctity of the Sabbath because he allowed the disciples to pluck some grain in the field and eat it when they were hungry.

Besides, the Pharisees were exemplary and correct in their outward deportment. They avoided all open and public scandal. They were not seen intoxicated and disorderly in the streets. They kept their vices to themselves, and when they did any open wrong it had a cloak of virtue thrown over it. Thus, they could absolve themselves from all obligations to take care of their poor relations, on the pretence of having dedicated their property to God. They gave alms, and paid their tithes punctually; they fasted, and they made long prayers. So the Pharisee in the Gospel says: "Lord, I thank thee I am not like the rest of men, extortioners, adulterers, unjust; nor such as this publican. I fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all I possess." This man seems to be among the best of them, for our Lord calls them in another place white-washed sepulchres, fair and white without but within full of rottenness and corruption. It seems that many of them could not say, as

this man did, Lord, I thank thee that I am not extortionate, unjust, an adulterer ; for they practised all these vices secretly, though they set up a mask of virtue before the public. Our Lord says they devoured widows' houses, while for a show they made long prayers. What seems to have been a general trait of their religion was this : They expected to be saved by the open profession of the religion of God, and by observing the outward forms and ceremonies of it alone, while they neglected and made light of its real spirit and obligations. "Woe unto ye Pharisees, who pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have let alone the weightier things of the law, judgment and mercy and faith ; these things ye ought to have done, and not leave the others undone."

Now, what is it which is wanting in the religion of the Pharisees? Sincerity—a real downright sincerity in their dealings with Almighty God. They know as well as either you or I that God is the infinite Truth, and that he cannot be pleased with or put up with lies and falsehoods, and yet their religion was one great and stupendous 'lie. They pretended to obey God, and they had no idea of obeying him, but transgressed his laws freely when they found it convenient to do so. Their obedience was partial, not complete, and there-

fore worthless. It did not bind them to God by any bond of love. They were, therefore, justly called hypocrites by our Saviour. Their religion was all false and hollow; and what was worse, it was accompanied by a self-deceit and self-flattery that shut the door to anything like amendment. Their justice was unable to bring them to heaven, because there was nothing in it which could unite their souls with the soul and spirit of the Divinity. There was no love, no respect, nothing to unite them to God here, and therefore it was folly to expect union with God hereafter—in which consists the Kingdom of Heaven and immortal bliss.

Are there any Pharisees nowadays, or have they all died out and disappeared? Of one sort, viz., those who deliberately make a cloak of religion, going to the sacraments and making a show of devotion in the church for the sake of the applause of men, and wilfully and deliberately playing the hypocrite in sacred things, I hope and believe there are few. The Catholic religion is too spiritual, too pure and holy, to foster such things, and the one who could deliberately adopt such a line of conduct in the face of her spirit and her instructions must be a demon in human shape. But are there not another sort of Pharisees: people who delude themselves with a certain

outside show and appearance of religion—not precisely to gain the applause of men, though that may have something to do with it—but hoping that God will accept such outside show in place of that real obedience to his commandments which proceeds from the spirit of respect and love? They are those who make light of a mortal sin. They say, I obey God in most respects; it is only in a few things I disobey him. It is not out of malice or hatred to him either, but simply to please myself and have my own way. I attend Mass regularly, and I pay my dues and give to charitable objects when solicited. What if I do indulge from time to time in dissipation or sensuality? I am probably as good on the whole as the most of people, and I do not believe my chance for heaven is so poor as you make it out.

Who does not see the perfect similarity between these and the Pharisee who said, “I fast twice in the week and give alms of all I possess”; only they are not able to say, I am not a drunkard or adulterous, for they deliberately transgress the laws of chastity and temperance. Our Lord insinuates clearly that they do not go down to their house justified—that is, in a state of grace.

Another lives chastely and temperately in his family, for his passions are not of that

particular kind which drive him to lust and sensuality; but he is covetous and avaricious. Honesty and justice do not stop him when he sees an opportunity to make something. Nobody will find me out, is his reasoning. The reflection that God sees him is one that he drives out of his mind. He says, Why should I forego so good a chance to make money?—it does not turn up every day. I am not a drunkard or adulterer, and moreover I will give something of this gain in the way of charity.

Another has property enough to live on and is neither impelled by avarice nor sensuality to commit outrageous sin. He is easy-going and loves his ease and comfort. To no one would it be easier to live in a state of grace, for he is really blessed beyond the common mass of mankind and God has smoothed away all the difficulties in his path; but this man will not take the trouble to fulfil any positive duty imposed upon him. He is not a strict observer by any means of the precepts of the Church. He will eat meat on a Friday without any reason except that he fancies it. He will neglect Mass on a Sunday out of laziness or caprice, and let the Easter season go by without performing his Easter confession and Communion. He will say, I do no wrong. I neither get intoxicated, nor commit adultery,



nor cheat ; I am simply neglectful. I have my business to attend to, or to make my summer recreation, or I do not feel like it ; by and by, when I have nothing else to do, I may take up the practice of my religion. Such men seem to hold God very cheap, and show a sort of contempt for him and his laws.

Now, in what respect must true justice exceed this justice which I have described ? It must be a justice which comes from the heart and the interior principle, and which will therefore manifest itself by outwardly obeying any one of God's commandments just as much as another. Whatever is displeasing to God will be displeasing to the soul that loves God, and therefore we may argue well, as Scripture argues, that he who disobeys in one point of the law is guilty of the whole law. The same spirit which leads to disobedience in one respect would lead to it in another, if circumstances were changed. Now, God is the infinite wisdom and goodness and justice, and anything contrary in any way to goodness and justice and truth must be most repugnant to God.

The true justice which is of Christ goes, then, to the bottom of things ; it drives out all injustice in thought and word and deed, and draws one to perfect justice, which is god-like. This our Lord explains in the rest of

the Gospel : "It was said of old, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be guilty of the judgment; but I say unto you, that whosoever shall be angry with his brother, shall be guilty of the judgment. Therefore if thou offerest thy gift before the altar, and rememberest that thy brother hast anything against thee, go first and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." He did not say, if thou hast anything against thy brother, but if thy brother has anything against thee. Here is godlike forgiveness and forgetfulness of injuries. So also godlike and perfect chastity in thought, word, and deed is insisted upon, and Christ-like humility in respect to God and readiness to obey him in all things. "It was said of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman," etc. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is better to have one eye than to be cast into the fire of hell."

Now, we have the means of knowing whether we be the true servants of God or not, and whether we can look with confidence or not to entering into the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven. If we find we are sincere in the practice of our religion, let us thank God for so great a grace and ask that we may persevere in it until our probation is finally ended.

## THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

*(Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained.—*St. John xx. 22, 23.*

WHEN the shepherds were watching their flocks near to Bethlehem the angel of the Lord appeared to them and announced the tidings of great joy: the birth of the Saviour in the city of David; and forthwith a multitude of the heavenly host were singing, "Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will."

There are men of good will; and also men of bad will, to whom there cannot be peace. Why? Because they are at war with God. They will not acknowledge God, but want to be their own God. They are in rebellion against God, and will not obey him. They are the slaves of their own evil passions; and defy the justice of God. Of course there can be no peace for such. They know they cannot escape their responsibility. The justice of God is hanging over them and makes them uneasy. As the prophet Isaias says: "But the wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire; there is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord God." On the other hand, men of

good will, through the grace of God, procured for them by our Lord Jesus Christ, enjoy peace. What is it to have a good will? To acknowledge God to be our Creator, our Preserver, and our Last End. To acknowledge our obligations to him for all we have received from him, and of obedience to him, keeping his commandments. To desire to do his will in all things; keeping not only the letter of the commandments but their spirit, and working diligently to make our calling and election sure. Such have made their peace with God, and the principal turmoil and conflict of their minds is over.

But our Lord came into this world to save, not the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance. The sinner when he turns away from his sin and turns back to God becomes a man of good will, and our Lord offers him forgiveness and peace. And to make it more sure to the mind of the sinner, he has established a special sacrament. You know what a sacrament is. It is a solemn outward ceremony, or rite, in which something is declared, and what is so declared is effected and brought about: as when the judge in presence of the accused pronounces the sentence of acquittal, setting his mind entirely at rest in the matter.

Our Lord established just such a sacrament of the forgiveness of the penitent sinner.

He did this on the very day of his resurrection from the dead. The Apostles were assembled in a room in Jerusalem. Fearing that the Jewish high-priests would persecute them, as they had our Lord, they closed and fastened the door. They were excited at what they had heard that day. What the woman and the two disciples at Emmaus related, that Jesus had appeared to them; and also what Peter said, that he also had seen him, they could not believe. It was so astonishing after the deep humiliation and disappointment of the Crucifixion. They were talking about these things when all at once they saw Jesus standing in their midst, and saying to them "Peace be to you." They were terrified, believing it to be a ghost or specter, and not really himself. He said to them: "Why do you not believe what I have already told you, that I was to arise from the dead? Here, put forth your hands, and see the wounds I received nailed to the cross. Put your hands into my side, pierced by the lance." And to make doubly sure he called for food and ate before them. Then all doubt vanishing, they gave themselves up to joy. He then repeated the second time the same words, "Peace be unto you"; for what he was to say was a message of peace, not merely to them but to everybody as long as the world should last.

Then he continued : " As my Father hath sent me, so I send you." We all know that he was sent into this world to redeem us from our sins ; to forgive us and reconcile us to God. He was sent into this world to seek and to save that which was lost. And now he makes over this great office, without restriction, to them ; giving them full power to execute the same office—to forgive and retain sins. He breathed on them and said : " Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye forgive, they are forgiven ; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained." Of course this office was to be executed with prudence and discretion ; the sins of those who were worthy were to be forgiven, and of those who were unworthy were to be retained. God cannot allow injustice and wrong, and is the ultimate judge in all cases. Note the solemn ceremonies which accompanied this gift of power. He breathed on them. The breath is the sign of life ; when it ceases we are dead. This breathing on them was a most expressive ceremony, as if he wished to make them one with himself and impart his very life to them. And the words " Receive ye the Holy Ghost," also ; for to forgive sins is not in the power of man—it must be given by God. And so that no one might say that they had it not, he said, " Receive ye the Holy Ghost"—that

you may do what without it you could not do.

We may say that our Lord here solemnly ordained the Apostles for their work; for at the same time, as recorded in another gospel, he sent them forth to preach the gospel to every creature. Here, then, was a sacrament of forgiveness for all time; and it was for our benefit and consolation. For what is it that makes one who was in sin and is repentant now down-hearted and discouraged? It is the fear that he is not forgiven. He knows he has offended the Almighty grievously, and he is afraid. He thinks his offences too many and too flagrant to be easily forgiven. He distrusts his own disposition. He needs an outward sign and declaration, fortified by God's own word, to give him confidence. Now, where they have abolished this sacrament—*i.e.*, outside of the Catholic Church—they say, "Only believe that your sins are forgiven, and they are forgiven." That is the difficulty, to steadily believe. We may believe a thing now, and not believe it to-morrow. We do not want to be thrown this way on our feelings of the moment. Thank God, we have the Sacrament of Penance.

Now let us see how our Lord deals with the sinner by means of this sacrament. He is always seeking him and urging him to amend his life. He leaves the ninety-nine sheep of

the fold, and goes after the one who has gone astray to lead him back. He makes the sinner unhappy in the midst of his sins. His pleasures pall upon him and cease to satisfy him. He feels a vacancy in his heart which they cannot fill. Plunging deeper into sin does not help, but makes him feel his misery all the more. And if he is insensible of his condition, God wakes him up, sometimes by sending sickness upon him and the fear of death; sometimes by the death of those near and dear to him—his children or some dear friend; sometimes by hearing the Word of God preached, or some bitter disappointment: in many ways He sets one thinking and desiring to lead a different life. This excites him to pray and ask the help of Divine grace. Now he begins to have a good will; to make good acts and resolutions, and to long with a great desire to get out of the slavery of sin. He begins to consider his past life. He examines himself, and this excites contrition and prepares him for his confession.

Confession must follow contrition in the sacrament. It is of obligation when there is opportunity, by the Divine institution; for it was said not only, "Whose sins ye forgive, they are forgiven"; but also, "whose sins ye retain, they are retained." The priest must, therefore, exercise discretion, and find out who



are worthy and who are not, to know what to do; and this requires confession. So we read that when St. Peter preached they came to him confessing their sins. And this has been in the Church ever since. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ produce what they say, and the existence of confession in the Church ever since is the proper effect which we see of those words.

The penitent, then, comes and makes his confession, and the priest gives him absolution—declares to him the remission of his sin. He is in the grace of God once more, and he will have peace and tranquillity again. His heart will be filled with joy and with gratitude, and he will say, "What shall I render to my God for all his goodness to me?" He will be determined to be a faithful Christian for the rest of his life, and show his gratitude by all the actions of his life. He will determine to receive the sacraments frequently, and above all to be a man of prayer. For prayer is the life of the soul, and will confirm us in all goodness. Without it we shall hardly persevere, but fall back again into our old sins, and our last state will be worse than the first. Let us thank God, then, for his goodness in giving us this sacrament, and run the race which is set before us until we receive the crown—*i.e.*, the reward of eternal life in heaven.

SENTIMENTAL AND PRACTICAL  
RELIGION.

*(Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.)*

Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.—*St. Matt. vii. 21.*

THESE words occur in the Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord, just before speaking the words of the text, enlarges on the goodness of God, and his readiness to hear favorably and to grant our petitions. He repels the idea that God can cheat us with false promises, or that he is not completely sincere when he makes them ; he says : " What man among you, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone ? Or if he ask for fish, will reach him a serpent ? " Then he says : " If you, who are evil, know how to give good things to your children, much more your Father, who is in heaven, will give good things to those who ask him. "

But after vindicating God from all imputation of insincerity in his dealings with us, he turns around and demands of us to deal sincerely with God, and not endeavor to put him off with an empty show of piety while we deny him what he really requires of us. " Enter ye in at the narrow gate. Wide is the gate,

and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction. Narrow is the gate, and strait the way that leadeth to life." "By their fruits ye shall know them. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit; neither can a bad tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that doth not bring forth good fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire."

And then, lest any one should make a mistake and take the bad fruit for the good, he goes on: "Not every one who saith to me, Lord, Lord," etc. Nothing is more common than for us, when we begin to appreciate the importance of saving our souls, to substitute a sentimental and counterfeit piety for the practical and genuine one, which alone has any value in God's eyes. When we begin to serve God we soon find by experience that it is not so easy and so delightful as it seemed to us it would be. There is one part of religion which is very pleasing in its nature. To think of the greatness and beauty of God, and above all of his goodness and his mercy, and readiness to forgive and overlook our sins, is pleasing. To be raised up above the ills and troubles of life by spiritual consolations when we pray, or hear sacred music, or witness a solemn ceremonial; to exercise our fancies on the joys of heaven—all this gives a sensible satisfaction; but to keep the laws of God strict-

ly, to forego the forbidden delights of the senses, to live always in sobriety and temperance, to put away the natural feelings of anger and revenge which rise up in our souls, to strictly abstain from all unlawful ways of getting money and from violating another's right by injustice—all this is quite another thing. This is such a restraint on our liberty of action that it is apt to become disagreeable, and at last something we are unwilling to submit to. Then comes up the endeavor to make a compromise with God, and to substitute for submission and obedience a kind of flattery, deceitful lip-service and homage which we expect God to accept in place of it.

There are not a few who act in this way. They come to Mass on Sundays pretty regularly. They say many prayers out of their books. While they are saying them they have some feeling of devotion; they, perhaps, tell God they love him with all their hearts. They recite the Rosary, and they make confession and Communion several times in the year. They profess a great love for their Catholic faith and advocate its claims warmly, and all the time they have no fixed principle of obedience to the laws of God and the ten commandments. In the moment of a strong temptation they are ready to fall away. They allow themselves to fall into mortal sin. They know

pretty well that they are in mortal sin, but they will not allow themselves to think seriously about it. They make light of their dangerous condition, and try to persuade themselves that it is not so dangerous after all. Do they not pray a good deal? Do they not feel sorry that they are not more faithful? Do they not strike their breasts, and say, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner?" Yes; but do they mean what they say? Do they not think themselves pretty good after all, and better than most people? Oh! they will after awhile make it all right; go to confession, and then begin over again. Thus they put in place of a true obedience to God a mere worthless feeling of devotion. They say, "Lord, Lord"; but "not every one who saith Lord, Lord, shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

How many will not break themselves of sins of impurity! Indulging thoughts and imaginations against the holy virtue of chastity, listening to evil conversations, reading bad books, and thus lighting up the fire of lust, and, indeed, indulging even in impure actions, violating that commandment which says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"; yet pretending to be pious, addressing God in

prayer, availing themselves of the sacraments of penance and holy Eucharist, and excusing themselves all the time: God will not be so hard on them; they are weak and frail, they keep the other commandments and only break this one; forgetting this severe sentence: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what a man sows that shall he reap." They live for the flesh and they will reap corruption.

In the same way the drunkards, and those who are destroying themselves and their families with liquor, though not actually drunkards. How they hoax and cheat themselves! It is only getting merry, it is only having a frolic, when they make brutes of themselves, when they destroy the happiness of their families. They are sunk in the flesh; they brutalize themselves, and think themselves good Christians all the time. Instead of breaking off their horrible habits, they keep right on, sinking deeper and deeper in the mire until they cannot get out.

Then there are many who are enriching themselves by dishonesty. They excuse themselves: others are doing the same thing; it is the custom of business. The merchant deceives about the quality of his goods, palming them off when they are of bad quality for first class; he cheats in weight and measure when he does not fear detection: makes out false

bills; he charges whatever he can get, taking advantage of the ignorance of the buyer.

The contractor does not fulfil the terms of his contract. If prices go down, he pockets the profit; if up, he fails to fulfil his contract: he does not furnish the material agreed upon, he slights the work, and puts the owner to much expense by and by to make good the deficiency.

And they all persuade themselves they are good Christians. They are sharp and able to overreach their neighbors, but that is rather something to be proud of. This ill-gotten money is likely to be a millstone about their necks to sink them into perdition. So mechanics and laborers are willing to idle away the time for which they receive wages, and so defraud those who employ them. They may make similar excuses to justify themselves for indulging anger, hatred, revenge—strictly forbidden by God's law.

We must serve God without deceit. He is worthy of it. He cannot put up with a sham service. Our Lord reproved the Pharisees for this kind of hypocrisy, calling them whited sepulchres.

Let us serve God as good children do a good father. Keep the commandments, not merely in the letter but in the spirit; striving to find out God's will and to do it. Oh, how

happy such a life is! We are not tormented by a bad conscience; we are not torn to pieces by worldly desires and lusts; but we have God with us; we live at peace with our neighbors, at peace with ourselves and with God, until the time of our trial is over and we go to God to be rewarded for ever.

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## CHILDREN OF LIGHT AND CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD.

*(Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.—*St. Luke xvi. 8.*

It is well for us to inquire in the outset of this sermon what is to be understood by the children of this world and the children of light. By the children of this world we may understand those who make this world the end and aim of their lives: whose object is to get rich, to enjoy pleasures, to acquire fame; and who aim at nothing beyond these things, and allow nothing beyond these things to occupy seriously their thoughts; who say, in the language of Scripture, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die; or who labor, as they say, to become famous and leave



a name behind them when they die, or to leave a fortune for their children when they are dead and gone.

These are the children of this world, and, on the other hand, the children of light are those who are supposed to walk in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ made known to them, and to frame their conduct according to his precepts, and to aspire to immortal life and to be received into eternal habitations. Every Catholic is in some sense a child of light, because he is made acquainted with the knowledge of salvation, and is not obliged to grope in the darkness of ignorance and error. But you can easily see that still, in another sense, he may be a child of darkness because he shuts his eyes to the light and will not be guided by it. According to the Scripture: "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." And again, if the light itself be turned into darkness, how great is that darkness! Now, our Saviour says the children of this world are wiser in their generation (or after their way and manner) than the children of light. What does he mean by this? Why, that the children of the Church, who have the light of the Catholic faith, are slack, negligent, and careless in the practice of their religion, as compared with the children of the world, who are all alive and full

of cunning and activity to gain the objects they aim at.

We need not go very far for examples; they lie at the door. Suppose I should address some one of those before me: Are you a Catholic? Certainly I am, as my forefathers before me for many generations were. Do you believe the doctrines of the Catholic religion? I do, and I intend to live and die in the Catholic faith. Do you consider it of much consequence whether one is Protestant or Catholic? I do, because the Catholic religion is the religion of Jesus Christ, who delivered it once for all; and it is the only true faith. Have you made your Easter duty? No, I have not. Why not? Because I have not had time; I have been too much occupied with my business, and have found it too troublesome to attend to it. But do you not know that by neglecting this essential duty you are in a state of mortal sin, and forego the advantages of your Catholic profession? Yes, I know that. Why not set things right, then, since you know how to do it? Oh, let me alone; do not press me so hard. By and by, if danger of death should threaten, I intend to send for the priest and set all right.

This man is fully aware of his condition. He knows that he has not on the wedding garment of Divine grace. He knows that if

called upon to render an account, as he may be at any moment, that he is unprepared; that if asked why he is so, he would be dumb and without excuse. Yet he seems quite unconcerned, and will take no pains to get out of this miserable condition. He is wise enough in his generation as a child of the world; you could not outwit him in a bargain. He will lay awake all night to circumvent an adversary; he will be where his presence is required, no matter at what expense of money, time, or trouble; but as a child of light, as the possessor of an immortal soul, as one who must give an account of his stewardship to the all-seeing Judge, he is simply careless, stupid, and indifferent.

Another Catholic may be asked: Do you observe the commandments? Well, I do the most of them, but there is one which I am in the habit of violating. Why do you do this? Because I am continually tempted in that one direction. But do you not know that he that violates the law in one point is guilty of all; that the same principle which makes one insult and despise God in one respect would do so in all others if the occasion arose? Oh well, I know what the doctrine is, and, after awhile I hope to do better. Would a man leave his house wide open when it was known all over that a valuable treasure was

contained in it? Or would a man of the least prudence leave fire and matches all about when surrounded by combustible materials? So the soul is left uncared for and surrounded by danger of irretrievable loss, while the most anxious care is taken for the goods of the world, which perish in the use of them. Let us take another case. We ask another Christian: Do you keep the commandments? Yes, in all important matters; my aim is to keep from all mortal sin. But do you go beyond that? Well, no, I do not. I allow myself liberty to do as I like within that limit. I eat and drink freely, and the best I can get. I lie abed late and longer than necessary. I am fond of dress and show. If I dislike anybody, I run them down when occasion offers. I get angry easily and like to get satisfaction for any injury done me, and like to see my enemy brought down. I pray little, and sit through the Mass thinking about all sorts of things. I grumble and complain at the weather, at any disappointment, and make everybody feel my ill-temper. But do you not strive to do better? Not much; I do not pretend to be perfect or aim at perfection. I only want to escape the final judgment. But do you not know that your spirit and that of Jesus Christ are quite opposed to each other? Do you not know that, by your own de-

scription, you are pretty much of a Pharisee, as described by our Lord? And do you not know that you are in most imminent danger of losing your soul and of falling into mortal sin? You are in some respects in more danger than an open sinner, because you are lukewarm. Our Lord says: "I would that you were either hot or cold; but now thou art lukewarm, I will cast thee out of my mouth." The open sinner will acknowledge his sin, while you are in danger of mortal sin which you will never acknowledge to yourself or do penance for, and which you will carry with you into the other world, where there is no longer room for penance.

The unjust steward was full of cunning and determination. He stuck at nothing in his villany. He was guilty of the most outrageous fraud, destroying the evidence of debt due by his master's debtors. He laid a cunning scheme, and he carried it out in spite of God and man. So long as he got his living, he cared not for the vengeance of God in the future world; he was a bold, audacious sinner. And when his lord found out his proceeding he commended him. This is strange. What does it mean? It means that he admired, not his rascality but his cunning, skill, and audacity, just as nowadays some of the greatest rascals unhung are admired for the boldness and cunning of their frauds. In this way men

who are the shame and disgrace of the race are honored, and vice and wickedness are esteemed more than honesty and virtue. It is a shame that it is so, and breaks down and destroys the Kingdom of God in the world, setting up instead the kingdom of Satan and of this world.

Our Lord wishes to teach us that we should apply all the skill and energy of these wicked men to the affair of our salvation, without a particle of the rascality. "Be ye wise as serpents and as harmless as doves," said he to his Apostles. The affair of our salvation is a grand, a magnificent, a noble one, worthy of the very highest and grandest efforts of mind and body. All our best thoughts, and highest skill, and untiring efforts, and most heroic sacrifices are only too little means to be applied for the gaining of so great a result. Foolish, and a thousand times foolish, are we if we neglect so great a salvation, or squander away in neglect and carelessness the eternal treasures placed in our hands.

Better let us imitate the heroic example of the saints honored in the Church, because they were wise in their generation as the true children of light,—St. Ignatius, for example. He had been a child of the world, devoted to fashion, pleasure, and fame; but he was wounded and laid up for a long time. He

read the lives of the saints, and he saw the true grandeur of their lives. "Why should I spend my time," said he, "and my life for perishable things when I could gain with them eternal things?" Like the other saints, he was wise and prudent in the acquisition of sanctity. He recognized that pride was his great enemy. Immediately he exchanged clothes with a beggar. He got the boys hooting after him in the streets. He was called a fool and a madman. But he knew what he was about. Never did a man pursue a deep-laid scheme with more skill than he—a scheme for gaining the Kingdom of Heaven. He did violence to Heaven, and he took it by force. O wise and prudent man! We are the fools; for what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Let us make good use of our Master's goods, of which we are not the masters but only the stewards. Endeavor to apply them all, talents, strength, health, learning, riches, whatever we have, to advance ourselves in the heavenly kingdom. So use the *mammon of iniquity*—that which is usually acquired with much sin and fraud—that we may wipe out the iniquity and lay up treasure in heaven; relieving the poor and distressed, instructing the ignorant and neglected, doing

all the good we can, that when we fail—as fail we all must, and decay and die—and the body fails and goes to destruction we may find friends who will cry out to God for us, and open the door and receive us at last into everlasting habitations. Amen.

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## NEGLECT OF GOD'S INSPIRATIONS.

*(Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

And when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying : If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace : but now they are hidden from thy eyes.—*St. Luke xix. 41, 42.*

IF there is any one thing remarkable in the history of our Lord's sayings and actions in this world it is this : that he seems always to disregard temporal advantages and pleasures and to fix his eyes on those which are eternal. So on the occasion of the text. Approaching to Jerusalem, the multitude pressed around him, crying, "Blessed be the king who cometh in the name of the Lord ; peace in heaven, and glory on high " ; and they spread their garments under his feet as he went along. But our Lord, disregarding these outward manifestations, fixed his eyes on the city, and foreseeing its obstinacy and refusal of salvation, and its conse-



quent destruction, he wept over it and uttered the mournful words of the text. Jerusalem is a figure of the individual soul, and in weeping over the destruction of this city we have a representation of the extreme anxiety of our Lord for our salvation, and his grief when any one is so unhappy as to lose it.

It is to be noticed that our Lord breaks out suddenly into weeping and lamenting at the sight of the city of Jerusalem as he first catches sight of it. Why is this? Because he loved it. And no doubt it was a city capable of exciting the warmest love and strong attachment. A city magnificently situated on a lofty plain, like an immense fortress, defended on all sides by the steepness of the approach, with its splendid Temple and palaces and gardens, surrounded by a rich and beautiful country, no city in the world could rival it in many respects; and no doubt our Lord had in the highest degree the sentiment of many Jews toward this most venerable and sacred city of God, the figure of the eternal city of God in heaven. But what is the glory and splendor of the material city of Jerusalem compared with that of an immortal soul? Or what is the whole material universe, vast and beautiful as it is, in comparison? These things, it is true, reflect the power of God who created them, and they show his wisdom; but after all they are

only inert, unreflecting matter called out of nothing and destined to return to the same, but the soul is in the very image and likeness of God, endowed with intelligence, capable of seeing and understanding and appreciating all the wonderful things of the creation—the soul, called out of nothing, it is true, but destined to an immortality and created with powers and capacities wider than the universe, the power and happiness of seeing God as he is, and participating in his wisdom and glory and power. It is no wonder our Lord, as all this is present to his mind, should break out in exclamations full of passionate love and grief. “Oh! if thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that appertain to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes.”

Jerusalem verges towards its destruction. Its Temple will soon be overthrown, its walls will be cast down, its palaces destroyed, its people put to the sword, and it will literally be made a heap of—a scene of utter destruction, because it has not known the time of its visitation. Jesus Christ was among them, he was preaching in their streets, he was healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, making the lame to walk, he was multiplying prodigies without number, so that it was impossible for any one who was honest and sincere to avoid the evidence of his being a true prophet sent

from God. He announced a sweet and pure doctrine, of love to God, of peace and good will among men; a doctrine, which commended itself as coming from God by its heavenly perfections, and he promised peace and tranquillity of spirit here and eternal, boundless happiness hereafter to those who should embrace it. It was the time of their visitation, but they turned to him a deaf ear, they shut their eyes so as not to see, they hardened their hearts so as not to feel, and drew down upon themselves their own destruction; and this is the very thing which is often done nowadays. Many is the soul which disregards the time of its visitation. Born of Catholic parents, baptized, instructed in the truths of religion, having received first Communion, these souls have thrown away in great measure these good impressions; they have learned to esteem the present and its advantages as the supreme object of life; they have a prospect of making a fortune or increasing their already acquired property, and this has driven God and his commandments out of mind entirely. It is the time of their visitation; for every day, every hour, and every moment is a precious opportunity of making sure their salvation and immortal destiny, and yet year after year is slipping by unimproved. They are doing absolutely nothing to secure so great an interest. "It will all

come out right in the end"; or, "God is good, and he will not suffer me to be lost at last"; or, "What is the use of troubling one's self about the future? I am too busy to attend to religion now; by and by, when I am old, or when I retire from business, or when I begin to cease to take so much pleasure as I now enjoy, then it will be time enough to turn around and attend to my prayers and get ready to die."

Take care! The time of your visitation is slipping by and will be gone before you are aware of it. The worst of your case is, that you wilfully blind yourself, and persist in excluding everything which could enlighten you. Almighty God may do what he pleases, and you rebel and drive off all the good impressions he may send you. He may send sickness upon you, and for a little while you are softened; but the moment you recover you are just as forgetful and careless as ever. This has been my experience. I have known repeated instances where the most fervent promises were made of reformation when death seemed to be at the door, but I have never seen these persons at the confessional when God heard them and gave them back their health. I have heard the word of the neighbors: he or she is just as bad, just as blasphemous, just as quarrelsome, just as dissipated as ever. No, those who are hard-hearted and careless habitually; who

have deliberately made a bargain with themselves not to obey God, but to obey the voice of their own evil desires and their own present enjoyment; who are determined to turn a deaf ear to all that God says to them,—such persons run the greatest risk that the time of their visitation will go by, and that they will fall into final and irrevocable ruin. The time of visitation is now; for who can promise you that to-morrow will be such a time. Death is picking off his victims every day and hour, when he is least expected. He is like a rifleman aiming at us from behind a breastwork; we do not see him, but perhaps we hear the sharp report and find ourselves pierced with a mortal wound. We feel perhaps unwell, and it continues longer than usual; the doctor comes in, and he discovers that we have already fixed upon us a mortal disease. It is only a question of time how long we shall live. We know not how it has come about, or what has produced it, but the fact is all the same. We must die, and there is no help for it. Then shall happen to the soul what our Lord predicted of Jerusalem: “For the days shall come upon thee; and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee around, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: because

thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."

It is an agony beyond words to express to approach death and be unprepared for it. The natural horror of death is dreadful enough when we are best prepared. But the grace of Jesus Christ can, and often has, taken it all away and made it sweet and pleasant. But what consolation has the man who is unprepared? His heart is wrapped up in the world and the things of the present. He knows no happiness outside of them, and he must leave them all. If he is rich, he must leave all his darling possessions; an awful desolation and vacancy presses upon him. It is literally as if he were straitened on every side and surrounded by deadly enemies. All his pride and boasting are gone, and he lies a trembling coward, waiting for the word which shall drive his unwilling soul out of his body, to give an account to his God, whom he has treated with a life-long contempt.

Dear brethren, wait not for this experience to come upon you. You are now prosperous and healthy. This terrible day seems far off in the distance. But the time of your visitation is called a day; it is at best a short space. Your enemies will be upon you before you know it. Now God is kind and gentle; now the means of grace are abundant, like the fountains of

clear water flowing for all who will simply take the trouble to come and drink of them. What does God ask of you? Nothing which your own best reason does not tell you to be most beneficial and suitable for you. Recognize your own condition, enter into yourselves. Repent of all your sins; put away your injustice and turn to your God with your whole heart, and you will have known the time of your visitation, have profited by it; for the God of Truth has said, and he will not lie: "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall surely save his soul." Amen.

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## GRAND SECRET OF HAPPINESS.

*(Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

Blessed is the man who meditates on the law of the Lord, on which his will is fixed day and night. Whatever he doeth it shall prosper.—*Antiphon from the first psalm.*

HERE is a delightful picture of a happy man. There are so few happy people in the world, and we all long so after happiness, that it seems to me if we could be sure there was one really happy man to be found we would be willing to go hundreds of miles to find him out. And when we had found him we would ply

him with a great many questions: Are you really happy? What is the secret of your happiness? Can I be happy also in doing as you do? Pray give me particular directions; for I am troubled, I am perplexed, I am uneasy, and I would fain be peaceable and happy too. We all have an indistinct and floating vision of a calm, secure, and happy state before our eyes, which we would give the world could we only realize it; but alas! it seems to float by without our being able to tell what it is.

The Holy Ghost is the only teacher who can define and fill up these dim outlines and make a permanent reality of it to us. We have this glorious and sublime teaching in the words of our text: "Blessed is the man who meditates on the law of the Lord; his will is fixed upon it night and day. All that he doeth prospers."

Men meditate often night and day. Nothing is more common. Their brain is occupied without cessation from the time they wake up in the morning until they sleep at night; and even the same thoughts extend into their dreams. What do they meditate about? About those things which are the objects of their desires; what they have set their hearts upon. An old man, who had lost in a great measure the use of his faculties, was asked if he could understand what was said by people he met



in the streets. His reply was : When I am in company with several people talking together I every now and then catch one word, but everything else seems to go by. That word is "dollar." It is dollars, dollars, dollars all the time ! This is what people meditate on day and night—how to make money, how to accumulate. They do not need to be taught how to make these meditations. Money is desirable—that is enough. The whole science of meditation is comprised in that word desirable. Where your treasure is, there is your heart ; and we may add, where your heart is there are your thoughts.

But does all this incessant application of mind to wealth and temporal goods make one happy ? Not at all. Experience answers this question. It only kills time, it only deadens thought, it only puts off the evil day a little while. A man is no more made happy in this way than when he is intoxicated and out of his reason, or asleep and unconscious, or crazy and unable to bring things to their real bearing. Nor so much so, because, having possession of his reason, it continually tells him that nothing on which he bases his happiness is permanent ; that it may all be swept away in an instant ; that the time must come, and that shortly at best, when all will be swept away and gone for ever. A waste and desolate

future lies before him in old age ; and if he will escape that, a more horrid waste, a more awful desolation is his in death, a violent separation from all he holds dear. Happiness never can be the result of setting our meditation day and night on what alas ! the world does in fact—the possession of temporal and perishable goods. “Blessed is the man,” says the Preacher, “who has not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money, nor in treasures” (Ecclus. xxxi. 8).

If we would be happy our desires and our meditations or thoughts must be on that which is imperishable and eternal. We cannot be steady when we stand on an unsteady and moving foundation. God alone is the immovable, and we must be grounded on him if we would be immovable. His law and his will must be our law and our will, or we shall be carried about like the shifting dust before the wind.

We can be happy in putting our wills upon the law of God and making it our continual desire and our continual study. Why ? Because our own inward souls tell us that here there is no deceit and no failure. The will of God and his law is perfect and altogether lovely, for it is drawn out of the infinite goodness and wisdom of God. Could we in the whole course of our life follow in all things

simply and without deviation the will of God, we know that we should attain the greatest perfection and the greatest happiness possible. The least deviation from such a course we all feel would be a blot in our lives and a great loss to us. Our inward conscience tells us that God will reward us for obeying his will, and with a reward that is beyond and above any temporal reward. Our hearts tell us that, where there is room for choice in our actions and various roads lie before us, we shall absolutely make no mistake if we choose the one God designs for us. It is as if an object of immense value were placed before us and other petty and trifling objects, and we should neglect all these little things and press forward to gain that precious object.

When this is true of any single action of ours, much more should we direct all to this one end. Then life becomes all of one piece. It is all satisfactory in the highest degree to our own inmost reasons and souls. We read, in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, of St. Anthony and of many others that their countenances expressed a wonderful deal of placidity and of extreme contentment. It is no wonder. Their whole aim and object was God's will. Their study and desire was all on this, and they experienced such a satisfaction and contentment that it could not fail to beam

forth in their countenances. As the continual pursuit of money or worldly objects gives a hard and rigid appearance to the face, so the continual pursuit of God spreads a softness and gentleness over it which indicates the rest of the soul.

“Blessed is the man who meditates on the law of his God day and night: for behold whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper.” How shall it prosper? Because in whatever he undertakes he is sure to gain the chief end he proposed to himself. If he fails, his failure is only in the trifling and unimportant part of his action. A man of this sort goes about his business or occupation. Ask him what his object is, and his answer will most likely be, To make a living, to acquire something for myself or my family against a rainy day, or for the future; such is my plain duty, as it seems to me. All right. He labors on cheerfully, but owing to unforeseen circumstances he does not succeed; business is not flourishing, work is not to be had, his project, whatever it was, is not realized. Nature feels a pang no doubt, it is unpleasant, but his will, his heart, is fixed on the law of his God. He sees the Divine will clearly in the course of events. God is drawing for him out of this disappointment a far higher good than success in his project would have brought him. He

is drawn to his God strongly in this disappointment, and throws himself upon him with all his force. In a short time a contentment and joy diffuse themselves through his soul far to be preferred to any worldly happiness. Let the same disappointment occur to another, and there is no alleviation. His heart stopped in this thing, and now it has failed and he has nothing to fall back upon. Murmuring, discontent, and despair is the result. Dissipation and crime are the only resource, or a sullen indifference which puts up with a thing because it cannot be helped. In all whatsoever he does, or in whatsoever befalls him, the man whose will is fixed in the law of his God prospers. There is no exception. Sickness and death are included. These are the will of God for every human creature. They are foreseen then, and foreseen they are offered beforehand to God. When they come, whether in youth, middle life, or old age, they are divested of their terrors. In a holy calm they are accepted, and thus a most acceptable sacrifice is offered, and the will of God is at last consummated. Death is a grand success as well as the other actions of life. Dear brethren, this blessedness is offered to each one of us. We ought at this moment to be in the enjoyment of it. Few, no doubt, attain to it in very great perfection, but a great and increas-

ing share of it ought to be the portion of every Christian.

Let us then, each and every one of us, strive to attain it. Let us set the law of the Lord before our minds as the rule of life, the grand object of our desires. Instead of resting and dwelling in inferior and lower things, let us look through all these things up to God. As the Apostle says: "Whether we eat or whether we drink, let us do all in the name of the Lord." Surely in all the principal actions of life let us aim at nothing short of the glory of God. There is all the difference in the world when the motive of the action is different, although the action itself is the very same. Let us refer, then, business, pleasure, and love of friends, everything in life, to God and his glory, and we shall reap from them all, virtue, contentment, joy in this world, and eternal happiness in the other. Pray to God with simplicity, with earnestness and constant perseverance, that he may teach you this grand secret of happiness until it shall become the ruling principle of your life. Amen.

SPIRITUAL DEAFNESS: NATURE AND  
REMEDY.*(Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.)*

He hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.—*St. Mark vii. 37.*

THE Church has selected for the gospel on many Sundays of the year that part of Scripture which gives an account of some particular miracle of our Lord in which he healed some bodily malady or infirmity. One gospel relates the healing of the man who had the dropsy, another the cure of the ten lepers, another the restoring of sight to the man who was born blind, another the raising of a dead man to life.

The reason why these gospels have been selected is, that in all these miraculous cures there is a spiritual meaning, over and above the event related, which it is most important for us to understand, and which we ought to reflect over and penetrate the meaning of.

To-day we have the opening of the ears and the loosing of the tongue of the man who was deaf and dumb. The Lord maketh the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.

Who are signified by the deaf and the dumb? Alas! the deaf are those whose ears are closed to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; and

the consequence of the spiritual deafness is that they are dumb and speechless spiritually, never opening their mouths to confess their sins, to pray to God, or to give any thanks for his goodness or love to them. What a miserable thing is this spiritual deafness! It transforms a man, made in the image and likeness of God, into the likeness of the beasts which perish. Why? Because this likeness to God is in the soul; it is in the faculty of thinking and of understanding; of seeing those things which in reality are useful to us, and those which are hurtful, and in choosing the good and useful, and letting the evil and hurtful things alone; in other words, it consists in the power of knowing God and of loving him, and of choosing him to be our portion and our happiness for ever. And this spiritual deafness and insensibility is a turning away from the thought and consideration of those eternal and imperishable things and giving all one's attention to trifles, to things which cannot last, and which, as Scripture says, perish in the using. When we see a brute beast, without thought, living for eating and drinking, it does not shock us, for it is its nature; but when we see a man with no higher idea, we are shocked, because we know that he is capable of something better, and that he ought to aim at something higher.



But you say, very true, but most men do aim at something higher than mere animal passions. They aim at rearing their families well, at educating them, and providing well for them; they aim at gaining fame and reputation, they aim at filling up their time with occupations which are considered useful—in short, to play their part well in this world. Well, I reply, if their aim does not extend beyond this world into the world of eternity, what essential difference is there between theirs and the life of the brutes which perish. The ants and the bees provide for the rearing of their young; they do all that is necessary to bring them up to get a living according to their needs and their faculties. They fill up their time in a manner congenial to their dispositions. They do not seek fame or reputation, to be sure, for they cannot understand what it is; but of what use will fame or reputation be to either you or me when we know nothing at all about it? What good will it do me to be praised where I am not, if I am reprobated where I am?

The man who is deaf to spiritual things is a self-condemned and a most miserable being. As soon as he turns his thoughts inward upon himself he becomes conscious that he is made for God, and that God he must have, in order to be happy. An inward gnawing dissatis-

faction with all the happiness that this world can afford him preys upon his soul. He feels most keenly its insufficiency, its instability and rottenness, and his longing for a perfect and lasting good is keen and painful. It is God crying out within him: Come to me, the Infinite and Almighty; and he turns a deaf ear to all this. He stifles these feelings and desires and aspirations within him, and turns back to his disquietude and dissatisfaction. "As a dog that returneth to his vomit, so is the fool that repeateth his folly."

But Almighty God will not allow him to turn a deaf ear to his voice in this way. He calls still more loudly, and forces the consideration of spiritual things upon us, if he finds us stupid and insensible in regard to them; just as when we endeavor to wake up one who is in profound slumber. We speak first; and when we get no answer, we speak louder; and if that does no good, we take hold of the sleeper and shake him, and drag him from his bed, and do not leave him until we perceive that he is really awake enough to comprehend fully the necessity of shaking off sleep entirely and going to his business or work. Then if he goes back to sleep it is his own fault, and he is justly the loser by his own wilful folly. Almighty God speaks loudly to us at times. We are suddenly afflicted by pain and

weakness; our strength and boastfulness of yesterday are all gone to-day. Nothing we can do or take does us any good; we are utterly powerless to help ourselves, and physicians with all their skill just as much so; in a day, or a very few of them, we are brought to the very shore of the great ocean of eternity. Oh! what a shrinking and dread fills our hearts at the prospect of launching out on that great untried ocean. O God! we cry out, save me, or I perish. The great spiritual world looms up grand and immense, and this world sinks down into insignificance. What is it all to me if I must no longer, in a few hours or days, take any part in it?

I have known the sick when death came plainly in sight to undergo an entire revulsion of feeling. Whereas they were passionately attached to children, and were incessantly worrying and anxious about their health and worldly prosperity, now they seemed to lose all interest, cared not to receive letters from them, became indifferent to their making money, and said, with a sigh, Alas! alas! how much have I been taken up with things which are in themselves of little account; what matters it how these things go when I must soon take final and everlasting leave of them all? What fervent and what sincere promises and purposes of amendment are made under such circum-

stances! Almighty God has thoroughly made the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak; but what then? How often do we see that, when health and strength return, it is all forgotten!

The penitent who promised so earnestly on his sick bed that he would renew his vows, on recovery to full health, in the holy tribunal of penance, is never seen by his confessor again. The father thinks in the sorrow and silence of his heart, as he sits in his confessional, Where is that false heart that promised me that he would not be ungrateful to God if God would restore him to health? I know he has recovered; but alas! where is he? He inquires of his friends about him, and he hears that he has become more irreligious, more dissipated than he ever was before. The evil spirit was driven out of his house, the interior house of his soul was swept and garnished; but he has since taken to himself seven spirits more wicked than the first, and they dwell in that house and his state is far worse and more dangerous than it was at first.

And God calls loudly to us in other ways. When he sees us engrossed with worldly thoughts and cares so that we heed not his promises or his threatenings, he removes out of our way the obstacle to our salvation: the darling object of affection which has become

our idol, and which we fall down and worship in place of God. And so one after another, father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and near and dear friends pass away and leave us lonely and desolate behind them. How can we be absorbed in this life when we see our comrades and those dearest to us dropping away, like so many flakes of snow falling thickly to the ground? To the one who hears this loud call of the Omnipotent, life wears the appearance of a merest shadow, like the cloud which passes over the face of the sun, like the phantom of thin air which disappears before we can come up with it. It seems as if the king of terrors, Death, were standing at his own door ready to bear him away from all that he has experience of.

And God calls by the voice of his priests. You go to church, perhaps, regularly and hear the words of revealed truth preached in your ears. You hear of heaven and of hell in the very words of the Holy Ghost. You hear the faith of the Catholic Church, of which we must say, O my God, I believe it because it is thou who hast revealed it to her, and thou canst neither deceive nor be deceived. We hear that which Saints, and Martyrs, and Doctors, and holy Virgins, and an innumerable army of the faithful have believed, and died in the belief of, and which God has confirmed by innumerable

miracles. How can we, then, turn a deaf ear to that which is proved by such mighty evidence, and which is of such vast and immeasurable importance to us?

The consequence of this spiritual deafness is eternal—eternal loss, eternal hunger. We are now in the state of trial and probation. God has graciously made known to us his will and the means of salvation. If we do not regard his will and apply these means, we shall never reach the end. As well may we expect to reap where we have taken no pains to sow the seed, or to be comfortable in old age when we have squandered our substance in youth, as to attain everlasting life when we have wilfully neglected to obey God's commandments and to follow his will.

We punish children when they cry after trifles; we restrain their appetites when they desire what is not good for them, or more than is good for them; we educate them through self-denial to play a useful part in after life; but we ourselves are engrossed with childish playthings, we ourselves are filled up and running over with passionate and inordinate desires which can do us no good, but injure us soul and body. We will put no restraint on ourselves, and do nothing to educate our poor souls for that wide and boundless eternity which we must enter upon—perhaps to-morrow

or next week or next year, but which silently and noiselessly approaches us, and will come upon us as the thief in the night.

“Oh, children,” cries the Holy Ghost, “how long will you love childishness? And fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves? And the unwise hate knowledge? Turn to my reproof: behold I will utter my spirit to you and show you my words. Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded; you have despised all my counsel and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared. When sudden calamity shall fall upon you and destruction as a tempest shall be at hand, when tribulation and distress shall come upon you, then they shall call upon me and I will not hear; they shall rise in the morning and shall not find me. Because they have hated instruction and received not the fear of the Lord, nor consented to my counsel, but despised all my reproof.

“But he that hears me shall rest without terror, and shall enjoy abundance without fear of evils.”

Be warned, then, in time, ye who are deaf and insensible to your salvation. Let the words of truth find admittance into your hearts,

and when you find a consciousness of your evil and dangerous condition within you, pray earnestly to God, to our Lord Jesus Christ. Take your poor soul to our Lord and lay it down before him, and ask him to heal it. Pray with fervor, and cease not to pray that he will never suffer you to relapse into a state of carelessness and insensibility. It is well worth while to do so. It is a simple and easy and natural thing to do so, and it is of an immeasurable advantage. For Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer, will put his fingers upon our ears, and we shall hear; he will touch our tongue, and it will be unloosed, and we shall speak right. We shall repent and confess, and be forgiven. We shall experience the joy of becoming the children of God; and we shall wonder at it, and be filled with admiration, saying, He hath done all things well; he hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. Amen.



## ADVANTAGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEING A CATHOLIC.

*(Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ.—*Eph. i. 3.*

MY dear brethren, you enjoy an immense grace and blessing from God which I fear you do not appreciate at anything like what it really is. You are members of the one holy Catholic Church of God. When St. Teresa was dying she exclaimed repeatedly, Oh, thank God, I die in the communion of the Catholic Church! This holy saint saw so clearly that all her sanctity, and all her love of God, and all her reward in heaven flowed from her being a Catholic, that she thanked God with her failing breath rather for this grace than for any of the others she had received. Alas! I fear that the term Catholic awakes but little enthusiasm in many souls, that it falls dead and cold on many an ear, when the very sound of it ought to fill our hearts with a thrill of delight and compel our tongues to render a tribute of gratitude to God. You, the most of you, have been born in the bosom of the Church; have grown up under her sheltering care; have grown accustomed to the

name of Catholic; but do you realize all the sweetness and blessedness implied in this title? Let us see this morning what is its real meaning.

To belong to the Catholic Church is the same as to be a member of the body of Christ. The true Church of Christ is called by this very name by St. Paul, when he says: "I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for the sake of his body, which is the Church, whereof I am made a minister" (Col. i. 24). And again: "But performing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in him who is the head, Christ: from whom the whole body, compacted and fitly joined together, maketh increase unto the edifying of itself in charity" (Eph. iv. 16). Now, my dear brethren, there is but one body of Christ, which is his holy Church. As St. Paul says: "One body and one spirit, as ye are called in one hope of your vocation"; and "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free" (I. Cor. xii. 13). Our Saviour instituted one society when he said: "Go preach the gospel to every creature, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them all things whatsoever I have taught you: and lo I am with

you all days even to the consummation of the world."

Thus this society was begun by the Apostles, who baptized and added to the Church such as should be saved; and made them living members of the body of Christ. The work was continued by their successors age after age, until nation after nation had been brought into the fold. Then many strayed away and cut themselves off from this body; but the work went on until this very day, when you stand before me, by a wonderful mercy of God, members of this very body of Christ, which is the Church of the Living God. Why are you members of the Church rather than so many thousands of your fellow-beings all around you? That is a profound mystery; but such is the fact, for which you cannot be too thankful. To be in the body of Christ, the Church, what is it but to be one of the members of Christ's body? And Christ loves and cherishes the members of his own body. How tenderly and carefully we each of us cherish the members of our own body! We protect them from the cold; we clothe and adorn them; we nourish them with food, and if any one of them is injured we take the most tender care of it until it is entirely restored. So Christ cherishes and nourishes us, the members of the Catholic Church, which is his body. We are baptized

into him and become his bone and his flesh. To think that the God of Heaven and Earth, who is the source and fountain of all beauty and goodness and joy, should deign to create us out of nothing, and then exalt us to a participation and membership with his own infinite and indescribable glory and magnificence. Could we see and understand the exaltation of another to this sublime dignity and feel that we did not possess it, we would gladly submit to a thousand deaths and all kinds of suffering to obtain it. Here is true life, for it is the life of God; and this present life is death in comparison to it. Here is true happiness, and all the joy of this world is beyond all expression mean and contemptible in comparison.

What is it to be in the Church? It is to be nourished and enlivened with a divine principle of life from Christ Himself—just as the limbs of the body are nourished by the blood which proceeds from the heart to the remotest extremities. Christ is the head from whom proceeds, as Scripture says, that growth and increase which every member partakes of. So Christ says: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." What a misery, what a fatal defect to be cut off from the true Vine, to lie and wither and decay upon the ground! What if my body be pampered with delicacies, and my soul lack the food of eternal life? My body

shall become the food of worms, but my soul is capable of an unending happiness or woe. How shall we rejoice enough that we are branches grafted into the true Vine—members of that body of which Christ is the head?

And, moreover, think of the glorious company with whom we are associated. St. Paul says again on this subject: "But you are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first born, who are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the sprinkling of blood, which speaketh better than Abel" (Heb. xii. 24). You are associated to the Apostles, who spoke with Christ 1900 years ago, and with the early Fathers, their successors; with the thousands on thousands of martyrs who laid down their lives for the faith; with the holy hermits and monks of the early ages—St. Anthony and St. Paul the hermit, and Sts. Basil and Benedict. You come down later and glory in the poor and humble St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic and St. Bernard, and later yet with St. Ignatius and the wonderful missionary St. Francis Xavier, and St. Francis of Sales; and those holy virgins in all ages, St. Catherine,

St. Agnes, and St. Teresa. Oh, my brethren, do you not know what a holy pride and holy exultation fills my heart when I say to myself, I am united with that long, uninterrupted line of saints and martyrs, extending like a golden chain from Christ to our day : I am one of that company, I am not a stranger to them, I am not ignorant of their names or of their deeds. The Church of God forgets none of them ; she makes us realize that we are all one great family—brothers and sisters—in a real and a true communion. I remember the time when, out of the bosom of our common Mother, I was left alone and knew nothing of this communion and fellowship of the saints. Thank God ! that day is over. We are not in the sect or denomination which sprung up yesterday, and which is practically cut off from our forefathers of the faith, and who trace back their lineage to such men as Calvin and Luther and the eighth Henry ; but in the Church of the living God, which embraces all that is venerable and holy in all past ages. And besides, consider the clear and full knowledge you enjoy of all that it is most important and desirable to know. It is this knowledge which is really valuable ; without this all other knowledge is but empty wind and smoke and vanity, and, I may add, vexation of soul. What good will it do me to know all about the courses of

the stars in the heavens, and all about the formation of the surface of this earth, and the properties of different substances, if I do not know what is to become of me after death, and am ignorant what I exist for? I know very well I must die, for I see that every living soul on the earth in past ages has already died, and death is a phenomenon which is taking place every day and hour all around me. What the Preacher says is true—true enough: “And when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labors wherein I had labored in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun” (Eccles. ii. 11).

In the Holy Church we have a full and clear knowledge of all that relates to our eternal destiny; of all that it is most important we should know: the knowledge of what we are to believe and what we are to do. “A path and a way shall be there; and it shall be called the holy way, . . . And this shall be unto you a straight way, so that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein” (Isaias xxxv. 8). “I believe all that the Holy Church believes, because thou hast revealed it, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived.” These words of the act of faith in our prayer-books are indeed sublime.

We have the promise of God, the clearest and most undoubted, that he will be with his Church and guide her in truth. Her voice is God's voice: "I am with you for ever"; "The Holy Ghost will abide with you." What a full and complete assurance the Catholic has that all his faith is true, and that not one point of it can be called in question. He is not knocked about like a foot-ball at the will or caprice of men who set up for learned or wise. And how much there is to sustain and raise the fainting heart! Not only the consent and agreement of hundreds of millions of the faithful in all ages, from Christ down—that unchangeable and unchanged doctrine "once delivered to the saints," but the visible and wonderful intervention of God Himself confirming and witnessing to it in all ages. Where are there any miracles outside of the Church? I have never heard of any. And I say that within her borders, in some part or other, they never cease. And the evidence for the later ones is more striking than those of former days, because it is within our own days. Take one instance, that of the holy Prince Hohenlohe, who died only a few years ago, who lived in our own time. Through his prayers wonderful cures took place all over Europe, and we have one noted instance in this country, of which more than forty de-



positions on oath of the most respectable and trustworthy witnesses have been recorded and published. Where are those men and women whose whole lives are a continual miracle, like St. Francis Xavier, or St. Bernard, except in the Church? What a source of thankfulness it should be to each one of us that we are not compelled to grope about in the darkness of ignorance which prevails, and must prevail, everywhere else to torment the soul; but that we are within the house which is filled with the noonday sun of justice, which is Jesus Christ—the Eternal Wisdom, the true Light of the world.

On all accounts the lot of the Catholic is more favored than that of any other human being; more than that of any one who lived before his religion was established; more than that of any one who is outside of the Church. The poorest, the most miserable as far as this world goes, is more favored than the most beautiful, the most learned, the richest who has not the faith he has, the pearl of inestimable value, which when a man has discovered it, as Scripture says, if he knows what it is, is willing to sell all that he has and part with it if thereby he can only purchase it, for it will make him rich and great for all eternity.

But if we are so favored, my dear breth-

ren, we must, on the other hand, consider our responsibility. To whom much is given of him much is required. And, moreover, we have not as yet reached the goal and end of our course. We are in the way of trial and of the proof of our faithfulness. Our graces and blessings are given to us that we may improve them. It is true that if we are good Catholics, God will grant us a life here which is pleasanter and happier than any other can be; but our principal reward will be in the eternal world. If we are bad ones, we shall neither be happy here nor hereafter; we shall render null and void all the kind intentions of our Father in Heaven.

The sentiment, then, in the heart of each one should be, How shall I correspond to the graces God has showered upon me in the best way possible? I will briefly point out some chief things which you can do. For the honor of Christ and his religion show yourself in all relations of life to be the good Catholic—the observer of the laws of God and his Church. What stands in the way of this blessed obedience? Selfishness. Then be prepared to put down selfishness when it stands in the way and discharge your duty. “If any one will be my disciple,” says our Saviour, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.” In these days of luxury and indul-

gence the Catholic ought to be an example to all men of justice and sobriety and chastity, and obedience to all the laws of God. The Catholic ought to know the value of the soul, for he has the truth, and he should be the last man to injure his soul by wilfully falling into any sin whatever. Oh my God! what do we do when we forget this? We dishonor thee and thy holy religion. We become a scandal and a stumbling-block to others to hinder them from the way of salvation. Oh, brethren, if no other consideration could influence you, this alone ought to make you resolve to lead lives worthy of your vocation and free from every taint.

And how else shall we show our thankfulness? By all sorts of good works; by doing all the good we can. That should be the spirit of a Catholic—the very spirit of Jesus Christ, who went about doing good. And first we should be possessed with a zeal for the advancement of religion—which is the good of souls. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to die for us on the cross. God looks, I may say, only upon the welfare of our souls; everything else he makes subservient to this one end. I need not say how ardently each one ought to love his religion, and how ready he ought to be to lend a hand to sustain and extend it. God does not

require our lives; but if he did, we should esteem it a privilege to lay them down for the sake of our brethren; and if so, much more to give our time, and our ease and comfort, and our substance, for the advancement of the Kingdom of God in the world.

And when I look abroad and see the work to be done, and the immense opportunity for good which offers itself all around, I have to exclaim in a kind of terror, O God! strengthen us and enlarge our hearts that we may be enabled to prove equal to the task which thou seemest to lay upon us. In a few years, in many sections of our country, the majority of the people will nominally belong to the Catholic Church. But God grant that as we grow in numbers we may grow in virtue, and be not merely Catholic in name but Catholic in reality.

There is a glorious future before us, if we prove equal to it. Would to God that the same spirit of self-sacrifice, ardent devotion, and zeal for good might animate us which animated the first Christians, and spread the religion of Christ in spite of all obstacles throughout a world in bitter opposition! Let each one say to himself, It shall be so as far as I am concerned, and the work will be done.

And how beautiful, in this connection, is the work of the Society of St. Vincent of Paul—a

truly Christian work. It is not principally by controversy and discussion we shall promote our religion and the good of souls. These have their place it is true, and an important one; for the Lord said, "Go preach the gospel to every creature," and "faith cometh by hearing"; but it is charity—love for the poor, the afflicted, the ignorant, and the neglected that preaches more powerfully than words. This is the work of this society, and I congratulate the members of it that God has put it into their hearts to join in such a work. It must be the purest and the sweetest pleasure of life to receive the blessing of the poor, flowing from hearts that mean it: "May the Almighty shower his blessings upon you!" Such blessings penetrate to the throne of God, who hears the widow and the orphan. Say, then, to yourself, What more can I do? not, What have I done? My dear brethren, you can all of you co-operate in this work. If you cannot join the society, help the good works of those who do. Give of your substance to help it on. Can you not deny yourselves something of your superfluities and luxuries, for the sake of the poor of Jesus Christ? Imitate St. John the almoner of Alexandria, who being presented with a rich coverlet, bethought himself of the poor who were suffering from cold, and had it sold the next day for their benefit.

The giver saw it, and bought it again and sent it back. The next day St. John sold it again, and it was again returned ; and so it happened until the good archbishop smiled and said, "Let us see who will be victorious in this contest of charity." Give to the poor, and you give to Jesus Christ, who has said : "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Let us be generous to him who has been so generous to us, and he will amply repay. The time will soon come when we shall hear from his lips the welcome words : "Well done, good and faithful servant ; enter into the joy of thy Lord." Amen.

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## FIRST CONVERTS TO CHRISTIANITY.

*(Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they took their meat with gladness and simplicity of heart ; praising God together and having favor with all the people.—*Acts ii. 46, 47.*

THE Apostles on the day of Pentecost received the Holy Ghost in power, so that they might announce to the world some great news. This news was of more importance to those who heard it than the fate of all the kingdoms of the earth, or anything that they had ever heard before or ever could hear. It was a

message addressed not only to the world at large but to every individual in particular, and carried with it his well-being and happiness, not only for this life but for all the ages of an eternal life. What was this great news that St. Peter announced? It was that Jesus Christ, whom they had a short time previously crucified, was the true Son of God, and that he had arisen from the dead because it was impossible that death should have power over a divine, almighty being; that he was the true Messias, who had been sent from heaven to deliver them from their sins and to open to them the gates of paradise. And when they heard this they were filled with compunction, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Poor, sinful creatures that we are, guilty of a heinous crime, how shall we escape the consequences of our sin, and appease the anger of our God whom we have offended?" And St. Peter spoke those consoling and loving words to them: "Do penance and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord shall call." And the scales fell from their eyes, they saw the truth, a heavy weight was removed from their hearts; with an indescribable joy and alacrity they received the

word and were baptized, as many as three thousand on that very day.

Now, what kind of Christians did these first converts make? Let us look into it, that we may see what kind of Christians we are, and also what kind of Christians we ought to be.

The first Christians obeyed the message of the Gospel with alacrity. There was no hesitation about them. On the very day St. Peter preached the resurrection and the life to come, they believed and were baptized. They did not let anything stand in their way. They said to themselves: "See here, this is a matter of my immortal soul; it is not a question of a day or a year, but of eternity. This is a matter not of pleasing man but of obeying the Almighty, who created me. This is not a matter of life and death, but of eternal and unending life or death. It were better to die a thousand times rather than to run any risk of a never-ending death. Nothing shall hinder me a moment; I will push every obstacle aside." And, my dear brethren, the obstacles in the way of some of them were tremendous. They had to forsake many of their most cherished prejudices; they had to believe in and obey the instructions of One who had the reputation of a malefactor, and who had died the most ignominious and shameful death. They had to give up many of the traditions of the glory of their race and



nation, and accept a pure spiritual sense of the prophecies, instead of one which flattered their national pride and which they had been dreaming over since childhood. They had in prospect the desertion of their nearest and dearest friends; they had persecutions and poverty and calumny, and even death in prospect; but still they did not hesitate a moment; they embraced it all most cheerfully and promptly, because it was an affair which had not to do with the world and the things of the world, but with God and the salvation of their souls. How different, alas! is the conduct of many who call themselves Christians and Catholics. Their religion is a very small affair with them. It stands away off in the background. Everything else comes ahead of it. As long as religion falls in with their worldly interest, it is all very well. As soon as it comes in opposition to it, they are ready to throw it overboard. Politics with many is far ahead of religion. What is the chief end of man? To please and serve God in this world, that he may be happy with him in the next; but they would answer out of their very hearts: No! the chief end of man is the success of his party; the chief end of man is to rule his fellow-man in this world and carry out his political policy. And what is the result of this? Whenever the political leaders prescribe conduct contrary to good morals, to honesty, to

truth, to uprightness, such people abandon the Church, and sometimes they and their children become its bitter enemies. The Church cannot compromise the eternal principles of justice and truth. She must condemn error, and thus she has to mourn the loss of many immortal souls who will ruin themselves. So it is with these secret societies and organizations. The Church is obliged to condemn them because they are in principle evil and destructive of society.

But how many prefer to have their own will, and obey such a society rather than secure the salvation of their immortal souls. Remember what the eternal Son of God has said: "He that loveth father or mother, wife or children, houses or land, more than me, is not worthy to be my disciple." If we prefer the Freemasons or the Oddfellows, or any other secret organization, to Jesus Christ and his Church, we shall have our choice, we shall get what we aim at; but we shall not get what we should have aimed at or desired—that is, eternal life and our portion with God in the kingdom of heaven. If we prefer our worldly prospects, our success in business, our pleasures and delights, to God and his commandments, we shall reap what we have sowed, and we shall have to say at the close of life: The summer is over, the time of harvest is past, and my soul is not saved. Oh,

fools that we were ! We thought the just were fools ; but now they are exalted and we are cast down ; we were the fools, and they were wise.

The first Christians accepted the Gospel as soon as it was proposed to them, and they lived up to it. The Gospel says : " And fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles in Jerusalem, and there was great fear in all." That fear of God tells the story. What was this fear ? It was a fear of offending God, a fear of committing sin. They realized and understood thoroughly that sin was the only real evil in the whole world, and they stood in a mortal fear and dread of sin. They were willing to sell all their property and come and give the whole of it into a common fund, and to distribute it to the poor ; but they feared sin. They did not fear poverty, they did not fear hardships, they did not fear death ; but they feared lest they might offend God in thought, word, or deed. They were just right ; all other evils shall disappear and cease to be, but the evil of sin is an eternal one. It is better to suffer all the evils of this life, sickness and death, rather than to tell one lie, or steal anything, or to indulge an evil thought ; and God will reward us in such a way for our fidelity that we shall be fully convinced of it.

Now, I ask you, Is this your disposition ? Are you in a great fear and dread of sin ? I am

afraid not. A good many seem to be lacking in this fear of God ; and it is the beginning and starting-point of all wisdom. How many go right on in sin, and even mortal sin, without thinking much of it, without being terrified or alarmed at their condition !

Now, what is the very first idea of a real Christian ? It is of a man who has abandoned and forsaken sin altogether ; it is of one who would sooner lay down his head upon the block than wilfully or knowingly commit a mortal sin. It is of one who, if he should by any misfortune fall into such a sin, would not sleep a single night or have any peace until he had wiped it out by a sincere and true penance and become reconciled to his God.

I heard a venerable priest of this city, who went to his reward a short time since, make use of a striking comparison. A man in mortal sin, he said, ought to be as uneasy and restless as one who was walking with bare feet upon a red-hot iron. It is very true. How can we go to sleep in our bed when we are lying in the anger of God, and when if death should come suddenly, as it often does, it would plunge us into an eternal punishment ? " Fear not," says our Saviour, " those who can kill the body, but when that is done can do no more ; but fear him who can cast both soul and body into hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear him." The early

Christians gave up their bodies to the fire and the sword; they did it cheerfully, they smiled in their torments, they joked and made merry at their persecutors, as St. Lawrence did. When upon his burning gridiron, he said, Now that one side is roasted, turn me, that the other may be so also. Death had no terror for them; but when sin tempted them, then they were afraid and they cried to God for help. One young man bit off his own tongue and spit it from his bleeding mouth, and thus he delivered himself from the danger of sin.

Dear friends, I cry out to you and say, Imitate these examples. Make up your minds also now that, no matter what may happen, no matter what hardships, what pains, what temptations may be before you, you will never consent to the least sin; that your mind shall be ever penetrated through and through with this healthful fear of God, and that you will constantly cry to God, and beg and beseech him to grant you this fear, that you may never dare to commit sin, however much you may desire it.

But did this fear of God make the first Christians unhappy? Not at all; their hearts were filled with exceeding joy. They had a firm hope of attaining everlasting life. Their fear was the foundation and basis of a sure hope. They set right to work in a practical way to assure their salvation, "in gladness and sin-

gleness of heart." Let us look into this a little. So great was their fervor that they delighted to be as much as possible in the temple of God, and their hearts were like an inflamed furnace sending up continual prayers and holy desires to God. In singleness of mind, like a man who has an immense treasure, and thinks everything else so vile as not to be worth thinking of. All deceit, all harshness, all unkindness and revenge gave way to a single desire to recommend themselves in all things to God's favor. They were so benevolent and charitable that if any one was in need they were willing even to sell their goods to provide for his necessities, and what one had was not his alone, but all had the benefit of it. It is no wonder, then, that they found favor with all the people.

Let us, dear brethren, think over the example of the first Christians, for it has been written expressly to let us know what a Christian ought to be. Let us praise God, and thank him a thousand times, that he has called us to his holy Church and given us the same privileges they enjoyed. Make a true contrition for our past shortcomings and our sins, and determine that by God's help we will be true and faithful even to the end; for "blessed are those who persevere unto the end, for they shall obtain the crown of eternal life." Amen.

DEPENDENCE ON GOD IN TEMPORAL  
AFFAIRS.*(Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.—*St. Matt. vi. 24.*

THERE are two masters who are trying to get possession of us. One is God, who is always urging us by his grace to give ourselves to his service; and the other is the world, which constantly allures and attracts us to give ourselves up to the gratification of our passions and forget God, or even to hold him in hatred and contempt.

We cannot serve them both at the same time, because they impose upon us things which are opposed to each other. God requires us to love him with all our hearts and all our minds and all our strength. He is our Creator, from whom we derive our life and being; he is our Preserver, who keeps us every day and every hour; and he is our Last End, because he has made us to be at last united with him, and to be sharers of his infinite and eternal glory and happiness. He is the Supreme Ruler of the universe, and governs all with infinite wisdom and goodness. We see, then, that he has a right to our entire service; that we must keep all his commandments and do his holy will to the best of our ability. Any-

thing short of this is not compatible with the dignity and character of God, and therefore cannot be entirely acceptable to him.

If we would be united to him and share in his happiness, we must render to him this service. Our right reason, which God has given us to guide us, tells us this without any mistake, and we are self-condemned and unhappy if we do not listen to its voice.

As God is infinitely desirable and lovely in himself, and is capable and desirous to render us happy beyond all our extremest wishes, we must be foolish beyond all expression not to serve him with all our hearts and minds and strength, which is the condition of reaching this final destiny. Now, our Lord points out to us what stands in our way, and is likely to destroy our success in this grand business of life. He says we cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. By Mammon we mean money, and of course what money can get for us. Money represents to us what is desirable, for it procures for us all sorts of bodily gratifications—the possession of houses, lands, fine clothes, and sumptuous fare, and everything which can flatter the senses. All this is opposed to the love of God.

We cannot love God unless we know what he is. And it is not enough that we have the bare knowledge, but we must have such a



knowledge of him as to draw our hearts and affections to him. We must be inwardly convinced that he is what he is. We must be penetrated through and through with this knowledge so that it shall regulate our lives and make us afraid to offend the Divine Majesty, and besides must be desirous and glad to conform ourselves to his will.

Now, this cannot be done unless we think of God, reflect upon his Divine perfections, pray to him, and depend on his Divine grace for everything good.

Now, if we make this world or this world's goods the object of our lives, we make it impossible to think upon God, to desire him or to love him. The condition of God's love is abstraction from the love of the world. If the head is full of business, or of pleasure, the thought of God is crowded out. If we find our pleasure in the riches or pleasures of this world, we shall find no pleasure in thinking of God or of prayer.

This is why our Saviour, after telling us that we cannot serve God and Mammon, explains his meaning, saying: "Therefore I say to you, Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on." I dare say many will say within themselves, when they hear this, What sort of a doctrine is this? We must look ahead and

provide for the future ; we would indeed be very foolish if we did not. We must try and provide for the support of our families. We must try to lay up something for a rainy day—for the support of our old age when we are no longer able to work or attend to business.

If any one thinks this, or says it, he does not apprehend the true meaning of the passage. It does not mean that we need take no care or pains to provide for the future ; that we can live in idleness and give no care for the future ; for the Scripture tells us that if a man will not work neither shall he eat. God requires us to have a prudent care for the preservation of our lives and health, and to fulfil all our duties to ourselves and our neighbors ; but when this is done we are warned against all useless anxiety, all fretting and worrying about what may take place in the future. When we have done what we can, we must leave the result in the hands of God.

A dark veil hangs over the future of each one. We know not what is going to happen to us. God alone knows that. He appointed the time of our coming into the world, and also the time of our leaving it. What bodily or mental suffering may assail us, we know not. All we know is what our Christian faith teaches us : that we are in the hands of a good and loving Father who, if we trust him,

will make everything turn out for our good. Therefore we ought to cast all our care upon him. "Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you." This is the duty of every Christian. When he catches himself worrying and fretting about his future, he should stop and recommend himself to the Divine protection.

But you may say, "That is easier said than done. In spite of ourselves the worrying and fretting will continue, and do what we will we cannot get rid of it." Well, does not God know all our weaknesses? Is he not always disposed to make allowance for them? He does not ask us to succeed, but he asks us to do what we can to succeed. He asks us as far as we can, by repeated acts of confidence in him, to form a habit of confidence. This is a lifelong work, and very pleasing to God. The greater the effort required of us to confide in God, the better God will be pleased when we make it.

There are two things which make us solicitous. One is that kind of covetousness which is always wanting more than enough, and more than we have. How many we see whose whole care is to heap up riches, and who give themselves up to the pleasures and enjoyments of this world.

This is directly contrary to the spirit of

Jesus Christ. "Having food and raiment, be therewith content, for what is more than this is of evil." What is necessary for life and health, and also for a reasonable comfort, is allowable; but to hanker after the superfluous and unnecessary destroys the love of God in the soul.

How hardly shall the rich man enter the kingdom of heaven. A camel can go through the eye of a needle easier than this, though all things are possible with God. A man may be rich, and not care for riches. He may be poor in spirit, and have his heart detached from riches. That is difficult, but it is possible.

The only good reason for being rich is not personal gratification, but to do good with one's riches. The rich man is God's steward, and is accountable for the use of the money entrusted to him. He is not the owner but the agent, who is strictly responsible to his Principal.

Another cause of solicitude is the fear that we will not have what is necessary, or that we will be pinched and in want. Well, what good does worry and fret do? When we have done what we could and ought to do, things will take their course—*i.e.*, Divine Providence comes in. It will come in at any rate, as God is the Supreme Ruler of all things. If we submit cheerfully and heartily, to the best of our

power, we lighten our burden as much as is possible, we bring peace and joy into our souls ; otherwise we suffer an intolerable pain without consolation.

Let us, then, be wise and serve that Master who can make us happy in time and in eternity.

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## RENEWAL OF THE SPIRIT OF OUR MINDS.

*(Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

And be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds.—  
*Eph. v. 25.*

THIS is a wise counsel of the holy Apostle, that we should be renewed in the spirit of our minds—*i.e.*, of our thoughts, desires, and intentions—because we are constantly tending to fall back, to grow careless, lukewarm, and become discouraged, and to even forget and bury in oblivion all our good resolutions. As our clothes get soiled and dirty simply by being worn, so do we contract defilement by simply associating with the world and transacting the necessary business of life.

How often it happens that one finds himself in great fervor of spirit ; it seems to him that nothing would be difficult, if he could please God by it ; that God alone is valuable and all

is dross compared to him; that he would be willing to suffer even martyrdom for God's sake. Yet in a few weeks, or even a few days, all this is changed, and he cannot recall any particular notable sin he has committed; but his fervor is all gone, he is immersed completely in the world and its business. God is away off and seems small; the least duty is difficult, and prayer an irksome, wearisome task. Good Christians grieve when they perceive this in themselves, and inquire anxiously for a remedy. As St. Paul says, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" St. Paul, in the text, gives us the answer to this most interesting question: "Be ye renewed in the spirit of your minds."

What is this renewal? How shall it be accomplished? This renewal is to be in the spirit of our minds—that is, it *must be an internal and spiritual work*. A mere outward change of conduct in certain respects, a few superficial and surface resolutions to amend some faults, is not enough. It must be an inward renewal of our minds—of our whole disposition, of our whole attitude and position towards God, so that our minds may truly be said to be changed, and to be rightly and properly disposed. Now, what is the proper attitude and disposition of the soul towards its Maker? It must be one of complete recog-

nition and acknowledgment of the true position of God and itself—that God is Creator and Author of all things and of all that it possesses ; that all its wisdom and beauty and power, and all its endowments and possessions, are not of itself but from God ; that God is infinitely wise and good in all his dealings with the soul, and has a supreme right to all our submission and obedience in everything. Well, to sum it all up, in short, that our whole will and desire should be in complete and exact concordance and agreement with his supreme will and desire in regard to us.

This is a very simple view of the matter, and one that commends itself to the right reason and common sense of every one, even of the worldly-minded and the sinful. To suppose that God is ignorant in any respect, and that his dealings with us are unsuitable or unwise, is absurd. To suppose that he is not well disposed to us and does not wish our welfare, is equally so. And that we can refuse to obey him in any respect, or deliberately set ourselves in opposition to him, cannot but be thought by any reasonable man a great detriment and misfortune to us. Then, to conform ourselves to God in all things, and to study to do his will in all things, is simply to do what our own judgment dictates to us to do.

To be renewed in the spirit of our minds is

simply to come once more on this platform of simple obedience and conformity in all things. The reason why so many people become miserable and cease to have any comfort in their religion is that they have departed in some way from this. Some are living in some kind of sin. One wilful mortal sin indulged in builds up a wall of separation between themselves and God. One deliberate venial sin of habit is enough to destroy spiritual comfort and make one cold in his spiritual perceptions. A wilful neglect of a known duty, or any indulgence of our appetites or passions contrary to the admonitions of the Holy Ghost within us, if persisted in, will produce the same results. If we would regain interior peace and resume our onward march, we must set these things which we find wrong in ourselves, right.

Sometimes it is in an over-indulgence of the appetite for food, or gluttony; more often in drinking more than a due sobriety and temperance will warrant. If this is the case, hear the admonition of St. Paul: "Wherefore become not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury; but be ye filled with the Holy Ghost." Sometimes it is the want of proper circumspection and modesty in one's behavior or conversation, the indulgence of improper words of doubtful meaning, or of evil



and corrupting thoughts. Or it may be deliberate ill-will or hatred towards some one, or dishonesty in some shape.

Whatever it is—and each one knows the plague-spot of his own heart—this he must sincerely resolve to put away, to use his best endeavors constantly to shun, that what was unconformed before may now be in harmony with God, so that he can look up with confidence and say, Our Father in heaven, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

But here comes up objections in the soul—a repugnance to do anything of the kind. What, shall I not keep at least one corner of my heart all to myself? Must God intrude himself into all my affairs? Shall I not reserve something?—at least some ways and manners or actions which I am attached to, and which are hard to give up, and which I feel to be displeasing to his Divine Majesty? What an intolerable slavery! No! it is not a slavery, it is a true liberty, to abdicate and lay down our own wills and take up the will of God, which will give us true freedom and cheerfulness and joyousness. To get this freedom we must be unclothed and stripped of the old man with his lusts and desires, and be clothed with the new man, Christ Jesus—*i.e.*, be renewed in the spirit of our minds. When we have severed the greatest bonds which hold us down, why

be held back from God by trifling and insignificant things?

But again, if I should throw myself in this way entirely upon God, who knows where I should be driven to? Perhaps into an austere and forbidding sort of life, contrary to all my inclinations and the death of all my happiness. Why conjure up such bugbears? God knows your character, your dispositions, your talents, your business, your circumstances, your strength and your proficiency in spiritual matters. He always adapts with consummate wisdom his means to the end to be accomplished. The Holy Ghost leads along gently and quietly all who are disposed to follow his guidance. To the man of business he adapts a course of life compatible with his business; to the man of family and in society a sanctity suitable to his circumstances and harmonious with all that is good and beautiful. The Holy Ghost does not drive along with violence, but leads with sweetness. No one need fear to commit himself with unreserved confidence to the all-supreme and gentle Wisdom. He will not be led astray or in an unsuitable manner. Let us, then, cry out to God, and say, O my God! the desire of my heart is for a thorough renovation and renewal of the spirit of my mind. I wish that everything displeasing to thee were removed out of my soul. I desire to imitate the

example of my Lord Jesus Christ in all things, and I purpose, with thy help, to fulfil all my duties, and to be kind and loving to every soul on the face of this earth, to the best of my ability, out of love to thee, and in order to acquire a higher degree of thy love. Or, with Father Faber, cry out shortly but with sincerity, "All for God!" "All for Jesus!"

But such feelings, such sentiments, are momentary, and the world is sweeping on and burying them up in its cares and anxieties. Let us take care, with a wise prudence and foresight, that they shall not be buried up. Let us renew them, let us renew them constantly. Let us make it our business to renew them. Let these aspirations for the renewal of the spirit of our minds be rising up daily, hourly, momentarily, like incense before the throne of God, until they become habitual, until they become like the breath of life, breathed out at every instant. Then we shall become indeed renewed; we shall become God-like. We shall say, with St. Paul: "I live, but not I any longer; it is Jesus Christ who liveth in me"; and again: "But I account all things but as dung in comparison with the excellence of the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

That we may all experience this excellent foretaste of heavenly wisdom and joy before God calls us out of this life, let it be our constant prayer.

## PRIDE.

(*Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.*)

Because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.—*St. Luke xiv. 11.*

A CERTAIN spiritual writer has said very aptly that properly speaking there are only two things in the universe—that is, God and the individual soul. Why is this so very true? We know that there are countless other things also. It is true because, in reference to our own particular souls, all these other things are in comparison to God as nothing. They shall all perish and be gone, while God will remain. Naked and stripped of all things, we shall one day face God. Yes, even here, before that time comes, we shall see all things fade and grow tiresome to us, when death shall stare us in the face, and strip us and tear all things from us, no matter how much we may be attached to them, and we shall realize that God, and God alone, shall remain, alone capable of being the life and happiness of our immortal souls.

This thought ought to be the death of all pride and vainglory within us. How shall dust and ashes be proud? How can we who are formed out of the dust of the earth, and our

souls drawn out of nothingness by the hand of another, presume to exalt ourselves as if we possessed anything whatever of ourselves or by our own power? How can one pride himself on being beautiful and comely, and value himself above another who is less so, when this beauty of form and comeliness is, without the least choice on his part, or any merit or deserving whatever, given to him as a pure gift by God, who has made us as he saw fit; when the circumstance of his birth, of his complexion, of his beauty and comeliness is, as far as he is concerned, a pure accident and entirely in the hands of a power outside of him?

And is it not so also with the other endowments peculiar to each individual. One is talented. He can excite the admiration and applause of the world when he chooses to do so. He is an angel or pure spirit in comparison with the great multitude who are so stupid and dull. He feels his superiority; but let him stop now, let him ask himself the question, Whence is it that I am so far above those around me? Why do I know so much more? Why do I seem to be of different and superior nature to them? He can assign no reason which is not outside of himself. He is not the source or the fountain of this excellence. He did not bring it into existence. He had noth-

ing whatever to say or to do with it. It is all given, purely and simply given, by God the disposer of all. So also with the more external gifts, fortune and wealth. One is rich, another poor; shall the rich ascribe his good fortune to his own talent, his own industry? These may have had their influence; but why does that other man, with greater talent and industry, remain poor? It is because God is the disposer of these things also, and he has chosen to allot to one what he has denied to another; and no man can go behind his allotments. When, then, we come down to the real plain and practical truth; when we confine our attention to what is essential and real, and neglect what is merely accidental and imaginary, I say there is no room whatever for one man to compare himself with, and to exalt himself above, his fellow-men. He has no right to say, I am better and worthier than thou.

The only comparison he has any right to make is between himself and his God. And what must be the result of this comparison? A deep and profound and boundless humility. It is properly a boundless humility, because this comparison goes to annihilate and bring us to what we are in ourselves—that is, to nothingness. It makes us empty ourselves of everything good, of every excellence, that we may bring it back whence it came and where it be-

longs—that is, to God ; and makes us say, It is not mine ; I am not its owner or proprietor. It is all lent to me. Thou art the owner and the ruler of it. What a foul robbery it is to rest in this beauty or talent, or in these riches, as if they were mine ! They belong to Him ; I have no right to appropriate them to myself.

Pride is nothing else than this : to rest in and value one's self on what he finds good in himself, without referring it back to God, from whence it proceeded. If we referred all to God and not to ourselves, we would be aware of, and fully aware of, every excellence God had impressed upon us, and yet be profoundly humble ; and, on the other hand, just as soon as we forget our relations to him, and confine our thoughts and attention to ourselves, we become proud and sinful. This pride is the worst enemy of our souls. The very business of our lives, that very thing for which we have been placed in this world, is to work to join our souls to God daily, hourly, all the time ; as the catechism says : “ We have been placed here in order to learn to serve and please God, that we may be for ever happy with him in the next world.” This union is brought about by thinking on God, by submitting in all things to him, by making him supreme and our first love ; and this pride by which we fix our attention on ourselves, and make self supreme,

and in fact make one's self God, is the very act which disunites and turns away the soul from God, and destroys the love of him, and makes us rebel against him, and fills us with repugnance to the fulfilment of his law. It makes us say: "Who is God over me? Why should God put any restraint upon me? I shall do as I please. I am the law to myself, and no one—that is, no God—shall govern me." It was this self-sufficiency that made Satan revolt against God, and dragged him down from being the chief of the archangels to be the most despicable of beings.

This is the reason why the Holy Ghost denounces so often and so severely this pride and estimation of one's self; and why its opposite, humility, is the very gate and open door into heaven. Another reason is, that this pride is so common and pervades all ranks and classes of men, and because when all other vices are in the way of being overcome, pride remains behind to destroy all the good work and to drag the soul down into ruin.

It is this senseless and excessive estimation of himself which bars the way of reconciliation between the sinner and God. The means of salvation are abundant and perfectly free of access to all. They are truly fountains of living waters flowing to all who will come and drink of them. The sinner can come when he



will and lay down his load of guilt in the sacred tribunal of penance. Let him resolve to amend his life and the priest is bound to absolve him, and Jesus Christ bound by his own truth to take him again into favor. What hinders him from coming? He himself often desires to come, for sin troubles his conscience from time to time. It is, What will the confessor think of me? When he knows my sin and my meanness, I shall be lowered and depreciated in his estimation. My self-love suffers pain in the avowal of my shame; or, perhaps, What will So-and-so say of me? They will laugh, or they will jeer and joke about it. So he puts it off, so he plunges once more into sin, so he goes on careless and unsettled and tormented for many a long year; and all because his own dear self is the only thing thought of, as if there was no God except himself. The God of heaven is put aside, and no thought is given to him. And of what account is the opinion of men to you? And what are you but a creature whose light and good and everything is received from God, who can withdraw them in an instant? Humble yourself; that is, recognize the truth—see things not in a false light any longer, but in the true light, and you will reconcile yourself to God without delay and without difficulty. Confession will ease all its terrors. It will be-

come a sweet and welcome remedy to the disorders of your soul.

This pride and self-estimation and desire to be exalted is the fruitful parent of all sorts of sins in the Christian who professes to live, not for himself and his own will and ways, but for God and his will.

Our Blessed Lord said very well: "When thou art invited to a wedding sit not down in the highest place, lest thou have to take the lowest; but take the lowest, that thou mayest be told to go higher." And again to the same effect: "Woe unto thee, Capharnaum, who art exalted unto heaven; thou shalt be thrust down into hell." How often do we not see persons frequenting the sacraments for a long while and zealous for their religion, and then falling back into an utter disuse of the sacraments and carelessness as to God's commandments, so that they are manifestly living habitually in mortal sin. A great change has come over them in the lapse of time; and what was the cause of it?

Somebody has offended them; the priest was short and abrupt with them on some occasion, or said something which wounded their pride or self-love; or some preacher made some allusion in a sermon which, without his knowing that such people were hardly in existence, they fancy was aimed at them, and they de-

terminated on the spot not to go to confession any more, or not to go to church, and abandoned themselves henceforth to work out the desires of their own hearts. My God! Jesus Christ was willing to be spit upon and mocked as a fool; and they would abandon God if any one says or hints a word that seems in any way depreciating. How often a fierce enmity and dislike springs up in the mind of one professing to follow the steps of our Lord! You ask, How can a Christian who thinks of his Master suffer such sentiments to get possession of his soul? The answer is: That person ridiculed me, or spoke of me with contempt, or said something evil of me. There has been a wound to self-love—that is enough; let Christianity step aside. Satisfaction must be had. The wild Indian who was insulted used not to rest satisfied until he had his enemy's scalp; and these Christians cannot rest without scalping the character, the reputation, the happiness of the offending party.

And now that pride and self-estimation has been thoroughly aroused, God and religion go overboard; the mask is laid aside, and the heart shows itself as it is. Rather than be reconciled, rather than acknowledge one's self to be in the wrong, one will forego the use of the sacraments, one will face up the risk of dying out of the favor of God. "Woe unto

thee : thou hast exalted thyself unto heaven ; thou shalt be thrust down into hell."

Pride leads to all sorts of sins and to the most sudden and complete falls. By it we forget God practically ; cease to refer to him ourselves and our actions. This opens the door to sensuality, to shameful falls. Then this destroying pride raises itself against an humble acknowledgment ; instead of stopping at once and arising from our fault, we are plunged into it again and again. We are hardened in sin, and become the apologists and advocates of sin ; we refuse to see our own guilt, and our condition becomes well-nigh hopeless. Oh, incomprehensible, senseless pride ! Who can understand the depth of degradation and misery you plunge one into under cover of exalting him ?

Let us understand, then, the great value of the principle laid down in the text : "He that humbleth himself," etc.

Let us beware of entertaining any high thoughts of ourselves, or making comparisons with others. Let us be careful not to speak anything whatever lowering or depreciating of others (for that is a secret way of exalting ourselves and making pride in us) ; but let us look upon ourselves as nothing, as creatures of God's hands ; let us see everything good in ourselves as gifts of God's pure bounty, for

which we must render strict account, and on no account arrogate them to ourselves; let us reject with horror any insinuations of self-esteem or self-exaltation on any account whatever, which may creep into our minds, but faithfully and sincerely carry all back to God, whence they come.

Then we shall be indeed Christians—that is, our lives shall be hidden, as St. Paul says, in Christ; God shall be the principle of us and of all our actions.

Then all disturbing influences shall be removed far from us. We shall be peaceable, for we shall in nowise be inclined to anger. You cannot wound self-love when self-love is transformed into the love of the Divine Being. We shall be pure and gentle and patient; for, seeing ourselves always in the mirror of the Divine Being, impurity and haughtiness and impatience will all disappear. Hence holy Scripture describes the very first beatitude: “Blessed are the *poor in spirit*, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Be *poor in spirit*—that is, humble thyself before God; practise this, and it will infallibly bring you all other virtues, and make you sure at last of the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

## WHAT IS THE LOVE OF GOD?

*(Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

Jesus said to him : Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind.—*Matt. xxii. 37.*

It is implanted in the soul of every reasonable being, by his Creator, to seek his own happiness, or what he calls good. We find men incessantly occupied in this search, from early morning to late at night, from day to day, and from year to year, as long as life lasts. They seek it in the present, and they look ahead and try to secure it in the future.

But, alas! the trouble is that they seek it where it is not to be found. Many place it in the gratification of the senses. They say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Our Lord has described such as these well: "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and who feasted sumptuously every day."

A life of this kind brings a horrible vacancy in the soul; like the younger son who left his father's house to go into a far country, and spent his substance in riotous living. He was then hungry, and would fain fill himself with the husks which even the swine would not eat. Such a life makes one utterly selfish, hard-hearted, and cruel; makes him unsatisfied and

discontented, shortens life, brings on disease, deprives him of hope of the future life, and makes him die in despair.

Others place their happiness in human praise and glory. They are pleased and satisfied for the moment with this empty wind. What sins and wickedness are they not ready to commit to attain this object! What lying, what bribery, what deceit! They die and are forgotten. They have not sought the happiness they were made for, and they will have to go without it for all eternity. The making of money is what most people think to be the end of life and its happiness. This takes up their whole time and attention. Invited to the eternal banquet of God, they say they have no time to attend to it; they cannot come. But, alas! money will not purchase health, nor life—for we can carry nothing out, and we must die shortly; nor peace of mind. Who are more restless and discontented than the rich; and more insensible and cold towards all spiritual things?

Our right reason and experience tell us that true happiness is to be found in none of these things. If our Lord had not told us so, we should know it all the same.

We can find our real happiness in God alone. He is our Creator. He drew us out of nothing. He endowed us with all the faculties and powers we have. He made us in his

own image and likeness. As far as the body is concerned, we are like the animals; we are subject to fatigue, pains, sickness, and death. As to the soul, we are like to God. We have reason and intelligence; are able to understand the works of God, and to enjoy unbounded happiness; and although now feeble and defective in mind, God intends to make us perfect and to gratify our utmost desire for happiness by making us sharers in his own infinite happiness and glory; in other words, we have been made for him and he is our last end. He is entitled to our love for this reason.

We know that we should love our earthly parents, because we derive our being from them, and because they love us and take care of us. For the same reason, but in a far higher degree, must we love our Father in heaven, from whom we have all. For this reason our Lord says: "Call no man on the earth father, for one is your Father, who is in heaven."

And God loves us. If he did not love us, he would not have made us. All his creation is beautiful and lovely, but the master-piece of it all, is man. It has been made for man's use and delight. The artist loves his work; his master-piece is his principal delight. So God loves us with a greater love than we can form an idea of. We may be tempted to think God does not love us, particularly if we have



turned away from him by wilful and deliberate sin ; but let us stop an instant to reflect, and we must see how absurd and foolish such a thought is.

Our own reason tells us this, and strengthens what God himself has revealed to us. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to suffer for us the death of the cross, and our Lord has said : " Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

As God loved us so much he rightfully claims that we should love him with all our hearts and minds and souls and strength. The love of God consists in the disposition to do his will, to obey his commandments, and to follow his counsels.

If we do this so far as to avoid every mortal sin, we keep the commandment to love God in substance, and will be saved. But to keep it in perfection and as it reads, the whole will of God in all things, small and great, should be dear to our hearts. Our aim and object should be to please God in all things. " Blessed is the man whose heart is in the law of the Lord his God, who meditates on his law day and night ; behold whatever he doeth it shall prosper."

The reason for this is plain. God is the infinite Wisdom as well as the infinite Good-

ness. He has laid out for each one of us a course of life which is the very best for us. This is his will in regard to us. Now, if we conform to this, it will be the very best for us. The nearer we come to this the better it will be for us. If we depart from this will in any respect, it is just so much loss.

The more completely and entirely we give our whole mind and intention to discover and do this will and law of God, the better for us. "Amen I say to you," says our Lord, "if you give a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple, you shall not lose your reward."

Love does not consist in a sensible and delightful feeling, which is after all in many nothing but self-love, for then we love God because it gives us pleasure; but the knowing who and what God is, and obeying and honoring him in spite of all obstacles, and in the state of dryness as well as in sensible consolation, is the true love of him.

But how shall we know what is the will of God? We know it already in all the most important things. When the question of sin comes up conscience will soon admonish us. We have instruction in the Christian faith; we know in a general way what is pleasing to God. If we have a strong desire to please him and do what seems best, we cannot go

wrong. If we keep ourselves recollected by frequent prayer, we shall know the will of God all the time. The habit of prayer will enable us to love God with our whole heart.

Sincere and heartfelt prayer will draw down an abundant grace from God. Without grace we can do nothing—*i.e.*, of ourselves without God we can do nothing.

Let us arm ourselves, then, with a strong desire to accomplish this great commandment to love God, and then beg and pray for grace to fulfil it. God will hear our prayer, and we shall be blessed for time and for eternity. Amen.

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## GOD READY TO FORGIVE.

*(Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

Son, be of good heart; thy sins are forgiven thee.  
—*St. Matt. ix. 2.*

THIS poor man brought to our Lord was, no doubt, much discouraged, and needed to be cheered up. Probably he had been sick a long time before the final attack of paralysis came on. We all know how distressing it is to lose the use of one's limbs and to become utterly helpless, so that one has to be lifted and helped to make the slightest change in his position. How completely tired out one becomes under

such circumstances; besides the dismal prospect that this suffering will continue, and cannot be cured, until death shall come as the only relief.

But this bodily weakness and suffering does not appear to have been the chief cause of this poor man's downheartedness. His mind was troubled; he was tormented by the thought that he had been a sinner; that he had wilfully and deliberately violated the commandments of God over and over again. No doubt his helplessness and great weakness had brought all this home to him with peculiar force.

As long as we are in full health and strength we are apt to forget God, and just live for our selfish gratification; but when God lays his hand on us and we are afflicted, we open our eyes and see things in their true light. All our boasted strength is gone; we can do nothing to help ourselves, and are entirely in the hands of God, who can do what he pleases with us. Then our sins come arraying themselves up before us. They show themselves in all their meanness and ugliness. We have refused to hear the voice of God, our own right reason which God gave us, and only listened to the voice of passion, and brought ourselves down to the level of the animal, which has no reason to guide it. But sickness and the

near prospect of death puts an end to this delusion.

So this poor man was oppressed by the weight of sin. And that was a great blessing from a merciful God. He was contrite. He said: I have sinned, and shall I be forgiven? I can do nothing to make amends for my sin. I can only be sorry and depend on the mercy of God for forgiveness. If God will only forgive me, I will do better and serve him all the rest of my life. He suffered more in mind than in body, and would gladly submit to sickness and all its pains could he only have a good hope of being forgiven and made once more God's friend.

And now he is brought on his pallet into the presence of Christ. Our Saviour looked at him, and saw clearly all that passed in his soul. He saw that he was contrite and had turned away from his sin. He was filled with compassion for him and loved him. He called him by the endearing name of son and told him to be of good cheer. "Son, be of good heart, for thy sins are forgiven thee." What a glorious and blessed word that was: to be assured that the only real evil which can afflict us is entirely removed, and that we are put in possession of all that is really good and worth possessing! What matters it that we have some little to suffer for a short

time when it will be removed for ever and ever?

Our Lord said to him these cheering words; but there were present some of the Scribes watching him, and ready to find fault with everything they could; and they said within themselves, he blasphemeth. In another gospel it is told why they accused him of blasphemy, because he forgave sin—saying, God alone can forgive sin. Our Lord put them to shame, saying: “Why do you think evil in your hearts? Is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, he said to the man sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house. And he arose and went into his house.”

All this is exceedingly instructive to us. It teaches us that our Heavenly Father is most ready to forgive as soon as we are penitent. No matter how great sinners we may have been, or how long we have persisted in offending him, he forgets it all as soon as we turn towards him. We may think it is not so, and we may be troubled with the thought that God is not willing to forgive; that very hard conditions are laid down for our forgiveness. This is a great mistake. The only condition laid down is that we should sincerely regret that

we have sinned, and should be resolved (God's grace helping us; and he is always ready to help us) that we will stop sinning and keep his commandments for the future. Those commandments are not difficult to keep, and if we pray in the time of temptation, or pray regularly day by day, can be easily kept.

Then God will meet us more than half way. He will console us, he will call us by the most endearing names. We shall be his sons, and he will be a good father to us. He will give us that peace of mind which we would not exchange for the whole world. He will confirm us in grace and make our whole life happy. He will give us strength to bear most cheerfully all the ills of life. We shall see the hand of God in them all. In short, our Lord will not only forgive our sin but he will cure us of that paralysis or palsy of the soul which makes us helpless for all that is good, and really makes our life selfish, miserable, discontented, and robs us of all our merits for the kingdom of heaven.

Let us, then, be animated with a great fervor in the service of God. If in sin, to quit it at once and turn to God. My brethren, if any of you are in sin, but feel sin to be a burden—a heavy one—turn to God, pray for pardon, conceive a horror of sin, and resolve to lead good lives.

Do not wait for God to send you affliction ; do it while you have health and strength ; then perhaps you may be spared this affliction, for God will not find it necessary to afflict you.

And besides, who knows? if you harden your heart, all trouble may not convert you ; but you may harden your heart still more, as Pharaoh hardened his heart in spite of the plagues, and so you may suffer greatly in this world, and suffer still more in the other world, banished away from God's presence. Repent now while you have time, while you have health and strength.

Do this, and you will hear in the depth of your souls the words of the Saviour: " Son, be of good heart ; thy sins are forgiven thee. The bonds of sin are broken ; the power of the evil one, which paralyzed you, is destroyed. Arise, take up thy bed and walk."

And the Saviour of the world has provided a means of hearing his voice. He has said to his priests, who stand in his place: " Whosoever sins you forgive, they are forgiven them."

Be contrite, then, examine yourself, go and make an humble confession, and a firm determination to amend ; and when the priest pronounces the words of absolution, it is Christ who says to you: " Son, be of good heart ; your sins are forgiven you."



## THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE SOUL.

*(Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage feast for his son. . . . And he sent other servants, saying: Tell them that were invited: Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come ye to the wedding.—*St. Matt. xxii. 2, 4.*

THE first and principal meaning of this parable of our Lord Jesus Christ is plain and obvious. He refers to the everlasting and eternal happiness of heaven which shall be the lot of all who depart this life in a state of grace—the great banquet in which the Almighty power and wisdom of God shall be exerted, and as it were stretched out for the bliss and delight of those who are admitted to it. The beeves and the fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Also the chagrin, the disappointment, the grief of those who shall get a sight of, and clear perception of this inconceivable and superabundant delight, and then find themselves hopelessly and for ever excluded from it.

This is undoubtedly the meaning conveyed to the minds of the chief priests and Pharisees who heard it, and the meaning we gather at once when we read it. But Holy Scripture has many meanings and much more useful instruction, which we do not gather at first

sight, but only when we meditate upon them and search out their hidden signification. And this parable has an application which, although similar to the principal one, is yet different, and is filled with useful suggestions, and most important for us to think upon. The parable not alone refers to the kingdom of heaven which shall be for us after this life is over and death has closed our worldly concerns, but that kingdom of heaven which pertains to the soul now, here on the spot, while on the journey of life, amid all its toils and troubles, before we reach the termination of death.

That there is such a kingdom of heaven in the soul on earth, is a thing too much overlooked and too much disbelieved. If any one speaks of such a thing as possible of realization, he is too often looked upon as a visionary, as one whose head is filled with fancies and crotchets, or as one who forgets the stern realities of life, and seeks after a will-o'-the-wisp which will lead him into swamps and quagmires. Or some may look upon him as a pretender and a hypocrite, who, having failed to realize such a thing in his own life and experience, should never presume to open his mouth about it, but speak rather of something more appropriate to himself and his own circumstances. But, my dear brethren, the one who possesses little humility may still have a sincere admiration for

virtue, and if he perceives his deficiency, he may long and desire all the more to possess it ; so the one who has very little of the kingdom of God within him may still appreciate it himself, and thus be able to communicate to others that longing for it which is all the greater from a sense of lacking it. That there is a kingdom of God within the soul here is not visionary or fanatical, and not opposed to the practical and sensible Christian life and service of God.

What is this kingdom of God in the soul? It is the Holy Ghost coming and taking possession of the soul, so that all our actions, all our wishes and desires, and all our thoughts, may be bent and directed towards the fulfilment of God's holy will in our respect. A king really establishes his kingdom when in every part of his dominion his authority is recognized and obeyed, not merely by compulsion but by the free will and hearty concurrence of his subjects; when they are convinced that his rule is a great benefit to them, and feel grateful to him for the well-being they enjoy. We often see this affection and loyalty go so far that the subject willingly lays down his life to maintain the authority of his prince against his enemies.

From this we easily see that the Kingdom of God may be in our souls in different degrees.

One man recognizes the sovereignty of God because he knows God is infinitely powerful, and that he cannot escape his justice if he disobeys. He resolves not to commit the crime of rebellion ; to obey God's laws and keep himself free from the guilt of mortal sin. He does not propose to do much more. He allows his soul to be taken up with his farms and his merchandise, so that he has not much time for devotion and communion with God. He loves good eating and drinking, and the pleasures of this life. He reflects over his possessions with much complacency, and thinks a deal on adding house to house and field to field. The kingdom of God is in his heart, but in a very imperfect way. God's authority is established, but not very firmly, and if any great temptation comes along it is in danger of being overthrown.

In another class this kingdom is more firmly established. These appreciate more keenly the eternal truths ; they comprehend more vividly the majesty of God, the difference between the temporal and the eternal. They contrast the beauty and glory of God with the satisfactions of the world, and, with St. Paul, account all things as but dross and nothingness compared to the love of Jesus Christ and the joy which follows from it. In such souls it becomes the passion of their lives

to do God's will. They are on the lookout for opportunities for resignation in affliction, for chances of spending their strength and vigor of mind and body in the service of God. They think over the precepts and example of Jesus Christ for the regulation of their thoughts, words, and actions. They long to acquire a habit of prayer; and when they find themselves disturbed and overwhelmed by thoughts of this world and business and cares, they grieve over it and long for the time when they can fly away and be at rest with God alone. As this goes on in different degrees in these, so is the Kingdom of God established more or less perfectly. And the Banquet of the Great King accompanies this kingdom of the soul, necessarily. The King makes a marriage feast for all who accept his invitation. Of course in this life, where joy and sorrow are always mixed and nothing is perfect, this Banquet is of a different sort from the one in Heaven. It is more hidden, it is more variable, it does not exclude the natural pains and sorrows of life. In short, it is accommodated to the state of merit, which is a life of suffering, and hardship, and self-sacrifice.

But still it exists; and in spite of all that, it has a wonderful joy and consolation in it. This will be seen when we look closely even at those who live imperfect lives, if they be in a

state of grace. It can be seen when we contrast the condition of their souls when in a state of mortal sin, and afterwards when they become reconciled to God. What a hell there is in the soul of the one under condemnation? How can such a one, if he allows himself to think at all, enjoy a moment's tranquillity? He is like a criminal under sentence of death, not knowing the day or hour of his execution. The remorse of his conscience, the sense of the worthlessness and instability of his life and of worldly pleasures, the dread of God's anger, make life miserable, and more miserable still if he does not think, but just lives the life of the animal. What a joy must fill his soul when he comes out of this horrid condition; when God is once more his friend; when his bonds are broken and he comes out a free man, the chains of Satan being knocked off! But his joy is tempered with dread and with regret, because he does not aim higher; he is more or less self-condemned for many voluntary faults and for unfaithfulness; a happy misery which God sends him to wake him up and make him more fervent and more secure of his salvation.

But let us consider the banquet of the soul on one who is full of fervor in God's service. Such a man is peculiarly the temple of the Holy Ghost, and God dwells in him—as the

Scripture tells us. Now let us see the fruits of the Holy Spirit in us: "But the fruits of the Spirit are charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, long suffering, mildness, modesty, chastity." Let us consider a few of these fruits. Take charity, or love. Nothing gives such delight as love; no pleasure is so great as to love those who are worthy to be loved and who love us in return. And who is so worthy of love as God, the Infinite grandeur, and beauty, and wisdom, and power. What an ecstasy of delight in the bare thought of aspiring after and being wholly devoted to God, and in thinking that he condescends to love us in return! When we love riches, we are not satisfied, for we know that they cannot purchase life, health, or even satisfy our desires. When we love friends or relatives, this love is a source of disquietude and suffering, for we do not know how long we can keep them; but in the love of God is no such imperfection. He is able to satisfy us, and when we obtain him we need not fear losing him for ever. This was expressed by St. Agnes, speaking of an earthly love: "Depart from me thou who shalt become the food of death, because I am already bespoken by another Lover. I am espoused to him whom the angels serve, whose beauty the sun and moon admire. To him alone I keep my faith. He

has girded my right hand and my neck with precious stones. He has placed in my ears pearls of inestimable value. Rejoice with me and congratulate me, because with all this I receive the shining throne of heaven."

Besides this consider the other fruit of the Holy Ghost; that is, peace. St. Augustine says: "We can never be at rest in this life unless we rest in God. What a delightful tranquillity that must be when we rest all our desires and wishes in God. He is the last end and object for which we were created. All our strife will be over when we reach him at last. And so our turmoils and anxieties and disturbances of all kinds can find no remedy except in the consideration of the infinite power and wisdom and love of God. There is the anchor of the soul amid the storms of life. Jesus Christ says: "Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Again: "Cast all your cares upon me." Happy is the one who does this! The more affliction befalls him the steadier and firmer he becomes in his trust in God. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him," says Job.

And consider what a fund of joy grows out of the fruit of the Spirit: benignity, goodness, mildness, etc., towards our neighbor. "Love thy neighbor as thyself." This love of our



neighbor, predominating in our souls, makes us gentle and kind to him; ready to oblige him, ready to overlook his faults and forgive any injury received. And this conciliates a return of good will and love from all, which is the noblest recompense for all the sufferings we can endure on our neighbor's account. In all this is verified the words of Christ: "He that giveth up house and lands, father and mother, wife and children, or anything for my sake, shall receive a hundred-fold in this life."

In all this description of the banquet of the soul here I have only described the ordinary workings of the Holy Ghost in producing joy in the soul. So, to speak, the natural effects which we can argue must flow as a matter of course from the condition of the soul given up to do God's will; but over and above this are many extraordinary and wonderful effects frequently produced, and which we read of in the lives of the saints, if we have not experienced them. God draws nigh to those who seek him earnestly, and manifests himself to them. He sometimes gives them such a vivid, lively idea of himself that they become insensible to all outward things, and when they come back again to the ordinary state they weep and lament bitterly that they must still endure this wretched life.

They see heavenly things distinctly, they

understand clearly the mysteries of the faith. St. Paul is an instance ; here is what he says of himself : " If I must glory (it is not expedient indeed), I will come to the visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not, or out of the body, I know not : God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man, whether in the body, or out of the body, I know not : God knoweth : that he was caught up into Paradise ; and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter." St. Alphonsus, in preaching of our Blessed Lady, was raised up from the pulpit in the air and surrounded by brilliant rays of light. St. Stephen, the first martyr, even in the agony of death, when they were stoning him, was filled with this influence of the Holy Spirit. Looking steadfastly toward God, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and exclaimed : " Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of God standing at the right hand of God."

What is a most common phenomenon among the saints, recorded in numberless instances, is "that in prayer, they were raised from the ground and suspended in the air." What does it show? That the spirit is raised to God in most intimate communion, so that by

Divine Power the body loses its weight and is drawn upwards. By such things God indicates to us gross mortals the wonderful effects of his power and goodness even in this life. Such things are not to be sought for, for we consider ourselves deeply unworthy; but God can give them, and does give them oftener than we think, and would give them to us to-morrow if he saw that we could bear them, and that we would profit by them and become more humble and more virtuous.

What do I preach this sermon for? 'To inspire you with more hopefulness and more ardor in the service of God. If you knew a rich mine of gold was in your garden a little below the surface, you would set to work to dig for it. A rich mine of joy and consolation is near you, in your heart, if you aspire after it. "If any man will keep my commandments, my Father and I will come to him and take up our dwelling with him." This is something to long for and to succeed in attaining. How shall it be done? Let us pray earnestly and as often as possible for light to know the will of God, and strength to follow it when we know it. Let this be our constant petition. Then let us put aside, as far as possible, all that we perceive to be displeasing to God. Our part is to remove the obstacles, to empty the soul of what stands in the way of God's free action.

God stands ready to do the rest. According to his word, "Blessed are ye who hunger and thirst after justice, for ye shall be filled." Amen.

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## AGAINST SENSUALITY, ESPECIALLY IN DRINK.

*(Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

For many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame.—*Philip. iii. 18, 19.*

THE kingdom of heaven, my brethren, is a prize which Almighty God offers to those who shall faithfully persevere in a life of obedience to his Divine commandments. It is not offered to *any one* else. We are created and now live in what is called a dispensation of merit. God has made us for a grand and noble destination. He has not simply given us the prize of eternal life without any conditions whatever, as he might have done, but he has determined to make us earn it. He has placed our destiny in our own hands by endowing us with reason and free will, and making us responsible for the use we make of them. This is indeed a most fearful responsibility. If we fail, who

shall measure the consequences? "To those who according to patience in good work seek glory and honor and incorruption, life everlasting; but to them who are contentious and who obey not the truth, but give credit to iniquity, wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile."

Now, dear brethren, things are so, and we cannot make them otherwise. We might be inclined to complain and say, Why will not God save me, at any rate? Why shall I not be rewarded, whether I deserve it or not? But all this is idle. All this will not avail us. It is far more reasonable to say, I will work out my salvation with fear and trembling. I will leave no stone unturned to make my calling and election sure. This is the grand business of my life, and there shall be no such thing as failure, for I am determined to give to it my first and best attention. Then, dear brethren, it would be as you wish. You would surely be victorious and gain the prize of your calling; for if the enemies of your soul seem to be numerous, those who fight for you are much more so. God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Angels and the Saints, are witnesses of our struggles. They are ready to help us, and most ardently desire that we may win. Indeed, it

seems to me that God is incessantly watching us, and urging us forward, and does everything, short of forcing us, to induce us to walk in the right road.

Animated, then, by confidence, and a firm hope that salvation is not only possible but that it shall be ours, what is the first step for the Christian to do? It is to see what are the obstacles which lie in his road, and to give his attention to remove them. This is what our Lord warns us. Count the cost, he says: "For which of you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the cost, to see whether he have wherewithal to finish it?" or, "What king about to go to make war with another king, doth not first sit down and think whether he be able with ten thousand men to meet him who cometh against him with twenty thousand?" That is, it is the part of the prudent man who has a great undertaking to accomplish, to consider well with himself what are the greatest hindrances and obstacles in his path, and take the best measures to remove them. Now what, dear brethren, are the obstacles in the path of your salvation? I know not what they are for each one of you in particular; that you know better, each one for himself. But I know in general what is the rock on which many a soul is very likely to suffer shipwreck—it is

the rock of self-indulgence. It is the love of good cheer; it is the inordinate gratification of the appetite in eating and drinking. Now remember well the parable in the gospel: "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and feasted sumptuously every day; . . . and he died and was buried in hell." And again: "And take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly."

The gospel is full of such warnings. But does it not seem hard to put one constantly under restraint; to oblige one never to relax his watchfulness over his appetites, when he has the means of self-gratification; when his very nature craves it, to make him forego his inclinations even when they are not in themselves sinful? Yes, my brethren, I will confess it does involve hardship; but it is necessary. It is such a necessity that our eternal happiness depends upon it. We live under a law of restraint. Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not commit adultery, honor thy father and thy mother, remember to sanctify the Lord's day. These commandments keep us ever in a straight and narrow path, and they must be kept at all hazards. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the com-

mandments." To keep these commandments faithfully a man must lead a spiritual, and not a sensual life. He must be emancipated, and freed to a considerable degree from the dominion of his lower appetites. If he is not, who will guarantee him from falling into mortal sin? The temptation arises and he is powerless to resist it, his appetite is so pampered; his inclinations, never having been resisted, have grown so powerful that they drag him down in spite of himself to the very pit of hell.

Does not experience teach this every day? We find a class of persons who are continually falling back into mortal sin, though they know their danger and feel a considerable alarm about it. They tell you they cannot help it; that they are very unhappy, and would gladly rise out of this state if they could. Well, how do they live? Look at them; it is easy to see: they indulge their appetites constantly in eating and drinking. They eat to the full, and of the best they can get; they drink very often, and, you can see it very plainly, this habit has made a considerable alteration in their appearance. They have little or no idea of restraint in this respect. They do not remember what St. Paul said, in spite of the hard and painful life he had to lead: "I chastise my body and keep it in subjection, lest when I



have preached to others I myself should become reprobate." What is the remedy for the evil of the persons I speak of? Plainly it is temperance and abstemiousness. They must reassert the empire of the spirit over the flesh. They must deny the flesh and refuse to satisfy its demands, until it ceases to be so importunate and hard to satisfy. For there is this war between the flesh and the spirit; and if the spirit does not conquer the flesh, the flesh will conquer the spirit; and the death of the soul will be the consequence. This is the doctrine of St. Paul, who says: "Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another: so that you do not the things that you would. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law. Now, the works of the flesh are manifest: which are fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, . . . enmities, contentions, wraths, quarrels, murders, envy, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. But the fruit of the spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, mildness, faith, modesty, chastity. . . . And they who are Christ's have

crucified the flesh, with its vices and concupiscences."

Now see, then, dear brethren, according to this admirable doctrine, what ought to be the study of every Christian: to free himself as much as possible from the slavery of his appetites and desires, that he may be free and unhindered in obeying his God. If he is gross and sensual, it is a necessity for him to take himself in hand and reform his way of living, and be severe with himself; if he has already made progress in this way, to continue and never relax his vigilance, but strive to live more and more in the spirit, and less and less in the flesh. In this way, and in this way alone, can he render himself happy even in this world, for we have just read what are the works of the flesh—that horrible list of vices which grow out of self-indulgence, and which will make a hell and a torment in the soul; and, on the other hand, the immense tranquillity, peace, and joy which spring from the soul purified and set free from all that can hinder its upward tendency to God. And do not think I am speaking only of those who are rich in the estimation of the public, and who have the means of luxurious living. No, the poor as well as the rich may live, and often do live, the life of the flesh, sunk down into a depth of degradation from the unrestrained

gratification of sensual passion. It is this passion for intoxicating drink which is the root of the loss of an immense number of souls of all classes of society, poor as well as rich, —the poisonous, malignant, deadly root of every kind of crime and vice. I will not now speak of the drunkard who has yielded himself the slave of this passion, but of those who are giving way to this desire more than they can justify themselves in, and with a suspicion that they are doing wrong and planting the seed of future sin and misery : such persons as indulge themselves in a drink in the morning, and then perhaps once or twice in the forenoon, and again in the afternoon, and go to bed on another or several at night. How many such persons I have met with I would not like to say. At first modest, respectful, with a zeal for religion and the progress and honor of the faith ; amiable, but in the course of a few years coarse, bloated, frequently overcome by liquor, ruined in reputation, degraded and in despair, and sometimes overtaken by sudden death. Oh, what a ruin of that which was once so fair and beautiful ! How easy it would have been to set all right, if taken in time. Now, if such persons ask me what they ought to do, I will tell them what any person who has a grain of reason and good sense will also tell them, and that is: Break entirely

loose from this evil habit; emancipate yourself completely from this slavery. Do not do things by halves, but make a thorough work of it. Leave entirely the use of intoxicating drinks. It is the only safe way for you.

This way of saying: I will only take them in moderation and what is good for me, is all moonshine. How long is such a resolution to last? If it lasts a month I should be much surprised. The force of habit and of long indulgence will sweep it away with a swift and irresistible force. How blind, how unreasonable are all such pretences! The soul is at stake, the immortal destiny is trembling in the balance, and one cannot and will not forego that small pleasure which is a foretaste of hell even now, and will surely bring it in the future. One effort of generous resolution, one true act of obedience to that inward voice which tells you what God really wants of you—for it is the Holy Ghost speaking within you—and you would arise out of your delirium; you would find the evil spirit depart; you would sit up, clothed, washed, and once more in your right mind. O happy soul! how rejoiced you would be it is impossible to tell. God says: What I desire of you "is obedience, not sacrifice"; not the blood of bulls and goats, but attention to my voice—the voice of conscience within you. What is the use of a few

days' fasting? what is the use of prayers and crying Lord, Lord, when you do not do what you know you ought to do?—abjure the use of liquor, which is ruining you. Degrade not My image stamped in your soul to the image of the brute; violate no longer the honor of your Redeemer, and of his Spouse the Holy Church, by being seen, Catholic as you are, under the influence of that debasing, sensual stimulant, which it is a shame to see upon any one; crucify Me no more afresh, and thus put Me to an open shame, but for my sake apply the remedy where there is the disease. Fast not so much from the meat as from the drink, which is the ruin. Do penance in the right direction, that it may be a salutary remedy and medicine for your soul; and you shall be my dearest and best beloved children; you shall receive grace for your souls in an overwhelming torrent which will sweep away all your other vices and sins, and make you sure of your salvation.

Dear brethren, think on these things. Do not let any one say: Oh! this is all fanaticism; this is a vagary of an enthusiastic priest who allows his imagination to get the better of his judgment. No, it is not so; I am no fanatic on this subject. As St. Paul says: I am not mad, but I speak the words of soberness and truth. I am not counselling total abstinence,

or what they vulgarly call teetotalism, to everybody without distinction; but I do counsel it to a great many. I say that they ought to adopt it; they ought never to let a drop of liquor or intoxicating drink pass their lips. As St. Paul said: "If eating meat would be an occasion of sin to my neighbor, for whom Christ died, I would never touch it as long as I lived." And to you, if it is an occasion of sin, it is your own poor soul that is at stake; why ever touch it?

If I recognized in myself any danger of sin in this thing, I would, so help me God, if I know myself, cut this matter up by the roots, and for ever abjure the use of this dangerous thing. Let us all reflect on this. Let us all be watchful; let us all be ready to sacrifice all that we are, all that we have—even life itself when God calls—and so shall we steer safely through all the dangers of this life and come at last to our happy home in Heaven—where all need of self-restraint, all danger shall be over, and where all our penance and all our self-denial shall be turned into reward, and glory and joy immeasurable and without end. Amen.

## SINCERE FORGIVENESS.

*(Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.)*

So also shall my heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.—  
*St. Matt. xviii. 35.*

How full of instruction is this gospel for us! Just as the king spoken of demanded an account of his servants, so God will demand an account of us of the deeds done in the body. We shall all stand before the throne of God, each one to be judged according to his works. Now, one of the servants owed ten thousand talents. This represents an immense sum of money altogether out of the power of any private man to pay, and this points out to us that it is impossible for any sinner to make satisfaction to God for one single mortal sin by anything he can do. For this reason our Saviour, who was God for all eternity, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, came down from heaven and became man that he might make satisfaction to the justice of God for us, and procure for us the full and free forgiveness of all our sins.

We, the most of us, have committed not one mortal sin, but a great number, despising God and his commandments, and living without any regard to his laws, for our own selfish gratifications. Who can reckon how

great is the debt we owe to the justice of God? Now, this man knew that he could not possibly pay his debt, and fearing the punishment he deserved, threw himself on the mercy of the king. He fell down before him; he besought him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Is not this just what we should do? Our conscience strikes terror into us; we are appalled at the sight of our wickedness; our sins rise up in array against us. Death may cut us off at any moment, and then what will become of us? What can we do but cry out, Lord, forgive us the past—we will in future pay all that is in our power—that is, we will keep thy commandments while we live, and honour thee and love thee and serve thee? For the merits of our Saviour, who has redeemed us and paid our debt, forgive us and give us the grace to follow out our good resolutions.

And when the Lord of that servant heard this humble and fervent supplication, he was moved with compassion and forgave him the debt. How beautifully this explains the love and compassion of God for his creatures!

The thought of his infinite majesty and power, and the sense of our own guilt and unworthiness, inspire in us fear and difficulty in believing we can be forgiven; but we must remember at the same time what faith teaches:



that God is also our Creator, who necessarily loves the work of his hand, and his own assurances to that effect, expressed particularly in this parable ; that no matter what our debt of sin may be, as soon as we regret it and ask him for pardon, he is moved by his love for us to grant it. He pities our distress, he comforts us. "Come to Me all ye who are wearied and heavy laden (with sin), and I will refresh you."

Imagine the joy of the debtor who was freely forgiven the immense debt he could never be able to pay, and then you will have the measure of the gratitude and love we owe the Heavenly Father who wipes out all that load of sin which weighed us down, and restores us at once to confidence and peace.

And now what do we do oftentimes after receiving this inestimable gift? We forget all about it. When the first glow of gratitude is over we become forgetful and cease to give thanks for it, and act just as if we had no farther obligation.

We do just what this servant did who was forgiven this immense debt, and who when he met his fellow-servant who owed him a small and insignificant one, he throttled him on the spot, saying, "Pay me what you owe me"; and this fellow-servant fell on his knees and humbly asked him to have a little patience with him

and he would pay the whole,—using exactly the language which he had used to his lord when he was brought to account. But instead of imitating his lord and showing mercy, he would not listen a moment, but had him cast at once into prison.

When we are forgiven by God we should be humble and grateful, and this should prompt us to be merciful and kind to all, no matter how much they may offend us. We must not be ready to say, You have offended me; now make satisfaction, or I will not forgive you. No; we must imitate our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who even on the cross, when they reviled him and spat at him, only replied, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Our Lord suffered all sorts of indignities in silence. He never said a word because he himself was insulted, but only when the honor of God was concerned. “Like a lamb he was led to the slaughter, and he opened not his mouth.” What does our Lord say about this in the Sermon on the Mount? “Blessed are you when men persecute you and revile you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, for great shall be your reward in heaven.”

But sometimes our fellow-men do us a great injury. They use vile and insulting language to us. They call us names which we cannot

endure. They are our enemies, and express their dislike and hatred freely. How can we be friendly with them? Often we can say with truth: Such a one has cheated me; he has defrauded me out of a large amount of money; that rascal has owed me money which he is well able to pay, and he has not paid it and he never will. Another has slandered me, and told lies about a member of my family; such a one is mean and despicable every way.

Well, I cannot enumerate all these cases in which we plead that we cannot forgive. They are included in the hundred pence of the gospel. That is, they are all trivial in themselves and not worth dwelling on. What are all the pains and sufferings and trials of this world compared with the eternal weight of glory which awaits us? All our wounded feelings, all the pain given to us by the conduct of others, will be over and gone in a few years. It will be like a cloud that goes over the face of the sky. But every act of forgiveness merits an eternal reward. In this light of faith an injury done us is a precious jewel, a glorious opportunity, a grand successful speculation which makes our fortune.

Now, you may say, All this is very well in theory, but impracticable. Why? I ask. Do you not recognize in God your Creator, your Preserver, your last end and chief good?

Why, then, should it be hard to obey his Divine Will? Why should it not be the joy and delight of our hearts to get a clear chance to do his will? And his will is clear. If you forgive not those who have injured you, from your hearts, you will not be forgiven. And to encourage us, If you forgive those who injure you, your Heavenly Father will forgive you.

But I have no enemies; I have no great spite or enmity against any one. I dislike So-and-so; I speak spiteful words against So-and-so; but they deserve it, they are mean. I do not feel kindly to some folks, but I cannot say that I hate them.

I am afraid you deceive yourselves; that you have not that kindly disposition to all men that draws down the blessing of God. We should love all men, for the love of God; that should be our motive. We should be ready to say: For the love of God I will never allow an unkind feeling to any one to rankle in my heart, but put all such feelings away promptly as soon as I perceive them.

To do this may cause us a struggle, for we are human after all. They will arise in our minds in spite of ourselves, and sometimes will keep coming back upon us, even after a long time, perhaps years, have gone by; just as a venomous serpent may hiss at us when

he cannot bite. But this is not sin so long as we do not consent ; on the contrary, a great occasion of merit. And when we have overcome our enemy who has tempted us, and kept charity with all men, the charity of God will diffuse itself in our hearts. We shall love God, and we shall be consoled and strengthened and more firmly united to him. With this principle made habitual in our hearts, we shall be confirmed in grace and be united to God in heaven for ever.

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## RECOLLECTION.

*(Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.)*

One thing I have asked of the Lord : this will I seek after.—*Psalm xxvi. 4.*

THE holy Prophet speaks here in rather a singular way, as if his mind were all excited and inflamed with some great idea which had occurred to him ; and this idea had filled him with an intense desire. "One thing," he says, "I have asked of the Lord : this will I seek after." This *one thing* must be of immense value, of overwhelming importance, because it stands singled out from all the rest, as if all the rest he might ask for was of little consequence in comparison to it. He does not say, O Lord, I have many things to ask for,

and I cannot get along without them ; I am deficient in all sorts of things, in all virtues ; grant me patience, grant me forgiveness of injuries ; give me holy purity, and so on ; but, one thing I am after, one thing I must have, one thing I shall seek for most diligently and never rest until I get it.

If this one thing was so good for King David, it must be also very good for us ; for the Holy Ghost puts this expression in his mouth, that every Christian who has a soul to save might breathe it out with the same spirit and intense desire, and receive the same benefit that he did.

What is this *one thing* ? Well, what do you think it is ? I am going to tell you what I think it is, and am going to give you my explanation why I think so. But what do you think this indispensable thing is ? Is it the Divine charity ? We cannot get along without that, and that is enough when we have it. Well, it is not precisely this the prophet asks for. Is it love of our neighbor—which will bring Divine love ? It is not precisely that. Is it humility, which is the foundation of all virtues ? No, it is not this. All these things are enough, if we were in possession of them ; but the question is how to get them ? The prophet gives a more practical and business-like answer. He says : “ One thing I have

asked of the Lord ; this will I seek after : that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

But what is the meaning of this dwelling in the house of the Lord all one's life? Does it mean to have always the opportunity of attending holy Mass and the other divine offices in the church? No doubt this is one of the meanings, and expresses the wish of the devout soul to participate without interruption in the sublime worship of God. But it seems to me that this is merely the outward meaning, and that there is a deeper and more inward meaning for us to seek. This outward meaning is the shell that contains the inward meaning, which is the meat, or the kernel, for us to feed upon in our souls. What is signified by "dwelling in the house of the Lord"? By house of the Lord is meant the church, the temple of God ; but that is not its only meaning. It means also the human soul. God chooses to dwell in the hearts of men. We are the temples of God, and God dwells in us. The heart is the tabernacle of flesh that God delights to dwell in. In the innermost recesses of the soul of each one of us God dwells. There he sits in silent majesty and sustains our life, and keeps us together, that we may not fall back into nothingness. We have not to seek him in the heavens or in the ocean.

He is nearer to each one of us than we are to ourselves, but in the depths of our hearts.

When the prophet asks, and earnestly asks, that he may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, he asks and seeks that he may be at home in his own heart with God ; in other words, he earnestly begs for what we may call the grace and virtue of *recollection*. To the want of recollection may be traced all our sins and all our miseries. As the prophet Jeremias says : “ With desolation is all the land made desolate because there is none that considereth in the heart.” And again : “ He that considereth his last end shall never fall into sin.”

My brethren, the thought of God and of our responsibility to him is one which we should carry around with us all the day long. We should rise in the morning with it, and we should go to bed at night with it ; and it should frequently present itself to us during the day, and should lie in our minds, as it were, asleep, but all ready to be waked up at any moment, all the time. This is what we may call the virtue of recollection.

The law of God meets us at every turn, I may say at every word we speak, at every look we give, at every step we take. And this law of God must be obeyed ; and why must it be obeyed ? Because it is God who commands,



and who must be respected, adored, and served. How can this be done unless God is remembered ; unless he is, as it were, present with us ? We commit sin ; and what is the reason ? I did not remember God time enough ; my passion was excited before I thought. My impressions of God's majesty were too feeble to control me.

If we had this holy virtue of recollection such would not be the unfortunate story. By thinking on God regularly, by thinking on him often, the thought of him grows in the soul. He becomes a greater and worthier object than all the world besides. We learn to desire him with our whole souls, and to fear the loss of him more than any other evil of the universe. And thus we become guaranteed from all mortal sin, and from venial sins, and alive to all our imperfections and faults. On the other hand, when the thought of God and of Divine things is crowded out of the soul by the world and its affairs, and we become filled with desires after this, that, and the other, then come a heap of imperfections, then many deliberate venial sins, and down we slide into the abyss of mortal sin before we know it.

By a remarkable coincidence we find our Lord using the same kind of expression that the prophet David did. David said : "*One thing I have asked, one thing I will seek for ;*

and our Lord said, *one thing* only is necessary." What is this one thing? It is the same in both cases. To sit silent and alone at the feet of God, to hear what he will speak to the heart. "Mary hath chosen the best part." Mary sat, regardless of all else, at Jesus' feet, listening to his voice. Recollection, the spirit of true prayer, or elevation of the soul to God, or communion with God, or whatever name you choose to give it, is necessary for every one that he may secure his salvation.

All this is very well, you say, in theory, but it is an impracticable thing you are proposing to us. Recollection is not compatible with the active duties of life we are under obligation to perform. Hold on; do not be so fast or so sweeping. Your state of life may be very distracting, I know. Your affairs may to a great degree take up your time and your thoughts. But I ask you, do you not wilfully admit into your soul a heap of *unnecessary* distractions; a heap of things which, at best, are utterly useless, and often worse than useless, for they are sinful? Do you not open wide the floodgates of your thoughts and let pretty much everything that comes along occupy you? Well, then, how do you expect ever to be recollected? How can you gather your mind enough to pray at all? Your soul is a garden to be filled with flowers and fruits, for the

Lord to walk in ; and you pull down the fences, let in the swine, and nothing can grow in it but thistles and thorns.

Now, if you would take care of your souls, and watch and aim at recollection as well as you can, I do not care what your business or employment may be (so long as it is lawful and honest), you will acquire a good degree of it ; for God, who sees your difficulties, will help you out with extraordinary graces and inspirations. If you would keep your eyes open to fly from useless and unnecessary distractions, from excessive recreation, amusements, and idle conversations ; restrain your curiosity to know and hear everything, whether it concerns you or not, thus filling your soul with a heap of rubbish ; it is astonishing what a relish you would find in your prayers and in the thought of God and eternal things. And indeed the details of your business or employment, if you apply a good intention to it and do it for God's sake, or put up with the troubles of it, instead of distracting, may even dispose you powerfully to recollection.

But there are many souls who could be much more recollected than they are if they chose to be ; who are not so much involved in business and affairs but that they have considerable time and opportunity to practise recollection. And yet what do they do ? They

fritter away their time without improvement. They seek all sorts of distractions instead of seeking to avoid them. They plunge themselves headlong into everybody's business, but their own. Instead of dwelling at home in their souls, with God, as they might and should, all the days of their lives, they are never at home, not one single day or hour. God knocks at the door, and you are abroad. A useless round of visits, a useless and more than useless lot of gossip, some romantic love story of imaginary beings, a heap of details of murders, adulteries, accidents, rumors form the daily occupation of your thoughts. Oh, I am so distracted! Well, how can it be otherwise? It would be very strange if you were not. You cannot pray because your mind is too much occupied with other things. You might as well try to pour oil into a vessel already filled with water. The water must be emptied out first before the vessel will hold the oil.

What a pity it is that many souls called by God to a more perfect life never improve, but continue years on years with all the faults they started with, because they do not give attention to fly useless occupations and distractions, and endeavor to keep their souls empty enough of the world to allow God room to dwell in them and work his work in them. Depend

upon it, labor and attention laid out in this direction will bring a better result than in any other. For if you dwell thus in the House of the Lord, then you will see the delight of the Lord. God will reveal himself to you, and you will experience a joy and a peace you have never dreamt of, and dwell for ever in that mansion above which God has prepared for all who love him. Amen.

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## FAITH: HOW TO PRACTISE IT.

*(Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.)*

And she said within herself: If I shall but touch his garment, I shall be healed. But Jesus, turning about, and seeing her, said: Take courage, daughter: thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.—*St. Matt. ix. 21; 22.*

THIS woman was healed of an internal disorder from which she had been suffering for twelve years. And she was cured instantly on merely touching the hem of our Lord's garment, without asking the favor, or even speaking a word. As our Lord said in another place, virtue or power went out from him at that touch; and he said, "Who is it that touched me?"—which seems singular, since all the crowd were touching him continually—"for virtue hath gone out from me."

So that it seems there must have been a peculiar excellence in this woman's disposition which attracted the Divine favor, as it were of itself, just as the iron rod by its own power attracts the lightning from the heavens. What was this excellence? Our Lord replies: "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." What was this all-powerful faith? This woman, no doubt, had been following our Lord, listening to his instructions and watching his actions. She heard his heavenly doctrine, and she concluded that no man, unless inspired by God, could speak as he spoke. She saw him exert a Divine power in working miracles: giving sight to the blind, hearing to the ears of the deaf, making the lame to walk, etc., and she concluded, perhaps, that he was—as he was—both God and man, the Incarnate God; or at least that a fulness of divinity resided in him, making him all powerful, all wise, and all good. She said to herself, observing him, He knows all things; he will know if I touch even his garment, who I am and what I want. He is all good, and knowing the desire of my soul, he will grant it and I shall be healed. She put her conclusions at once to the proof. She pressed forward, and reaching out her hand touched his robe, and forthwith her malady disappeared.

Her faith had two qualities in it—an en-

lightened understanding and a firm will to act upon its conclusions. And this is what made her actions so pleasing to God, and earned for them so high a praise from our Saviour. She did not believe through a mere blind enthusiasm, but she believed what she saw with her eyes and heard with her ears. And seeing and hearing what she did, it would have been most unreasonable if she had not believed.

For God does not ask us to believe without giving us sufficient and abundant evidence on which we can ground our faith; and a mere blind enthusiasm grounded on no sure evidence would not recommend us to him, but, on the contrary, be displeasing to him and lead us all astray. The idea of Catholic faith is not a mere sentiment of confidence, in which one persuades himself that all is right by means of excitement and effort of his own, but a reasonable conviction of the truth revealed to us by God, assisted thereto by divine help, and a determination to act up to it. This woman's merit consisted in just this: that she acted unhesitatingly and perfectly according to her conclusions. She allowed no distrust or cowardice to interfere and hinder her from doing what she felt to be the right thing to do. In this respect she differed from the Apostles on some occasions. Thus, in St. Mark we read that they were with Jesus in the ship, and there arose a

great storm, so that the vessel was apparently in danger of sinking, while our Lord was tranquilly sleeping in the after part of the vessel. The Apostles, in great alarm, went and awoke him, saying: "Master, have you no concern or care about letting us all go down? And he rebuked the storm, and said to the waves, Be still! and it was at once calm. And he then reproached them for their want of faith, and said, Have you no faith?" That is, Why have you not confidence in me? You should know that I can do all things by this time, and that I watch asleep as well as awake. You should remember this, and keep yourselves tranquil and give no room to such idle and groundless terrors.

And a similar and more striking incident happened to St. Peter. The Apostles were on board their vessel, the wind was blowing hard and there was a high sea; and in the middle of the night Jesus came walking over the waves to the ship. They saw his figure, and were frightened and cried out, and Jesus spoke to them: "It is I; be not afraid. St. Peter said, If it be thou, Lord, bid me come to thee on the waters; and Jesus said, Come. St. Peter immediately walked out on the waters; but it being dark and rough, his courage failed and he doubted, and began to sink. He cried out, Lord, save me! And our Lord stretched out



his hand and lifted him up, saying: O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?"

Now we see the difference. The woman did not hesitate; with manly courage, she did not allow her mind to waver, but pressed on to put her conclusions in practice. The Apostles and St. Peter, on the contrary, with a womanly and timid cowardice, allowed themselves to hesitate and waver, though they had no good reason for doing so. Now let us draw out of this the lesson our Lord designed to teach us; for these examples are, it seems to me, not of much importance in themselves, but as designed to give a lesson to all Christians, and for all ages of the world. We, my dear brethren, have the faith. We are in the bosom of the Catholic Church. We are in the line of direct descent from Christ and his Apostles. We have the faith revealed by Christ, and transmitted to us by the tradition of innumerable witnesses, sealed with the blood of the Apostles and of millions of Christians of their age and subsequent ones, down to our own times. We have God's own finger displayed in his own Church in many ways, so that the evidence of his truth is so overwhelming that we cannot escape from it if we would, unless we are false to our convictions, and lovers of falsehood rather than of truth. It becomes us, then, to act out this faith in practice. It becomes us to put away all

wavering and doubting in regard to the principles of faith, and to act them out consistently and unflinchingly in our lives. When we waver and hesitate, and begin to weigh them with temporal and worldly reasons, then we merit the reproach of our Saviour: "Have ye no faith"; or, Oh ye of little faith, why do you doubt? But you say to me: I cannot help wavering, I cannot help feeling doubtful. I say, then, bring at once the principle of faith to bear; repel that wavering and brace yourself up firmly in your will by the faith. If you feel doubtful, do not be doubtful or act doubtfully. Do as St. Vincent of Paul did. He was tormented by a feeling of doubt and by temptations to unbelief; his distress was great, but he was as faithful and true in all his duties and his prayers as ever, and he made a compact with God that whenever he was thus tempted he would put his hand to his heart as a sign that he firmly believed and would believe all the doctrines of the faith until his life's end. Here was true faith; not a sensible and consoling feeling of it, but a practical and living faith.

The just man, says the Scripture, "shall live by faith"—*i.e.*, shall regulate his whole life and all its actions first and foremost by the principles of his religion, or by the principles of faith. Now, what stands in the way of this and hinders us from thus acting? Without

doubt it is temporal interests, affairs of this world, and our passions. These draw us downward, and make the faith seem dark and obscure in our sight. Then we begin to doubt and waver in our minds. Then we say in our hearts, What if these things are not so? The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God; they have become corrupt and abominable in all their ways. We must be men of faith by turning a deaf ear to all such suggestions. We must say promptly, Credo—I believe! Get behind me, Satan! I will believe all the days of my life; and I will be governed not by my lusts and my wicked desires, but by the principles which God has made known for the salvation of my soul.

We may be beset at times by temptations and stormy trials; then, when all seems dark and we seem ready to suffer shipwreck, we must arouse our faith. Remember that Jesus is with us, and ready to succor us. He is, as it were, lying asleep and apparently unmindful of us; but we must not allow ourselves to doubt that he is watching over us and defending us—"Making for us an escape, that we may not be tempted above what we can bear." We must, then, ever animate and enliven our faith by making many acts of faith, by recurring in our minds to the eternal truths revealed by God and proposed by His Holy Church, founded on

Peter and infallibly guided by the Holy Ghost. We must have our eyes fixed on the point of eternity, and pursue the straight road of the commandments of God, deviating neither to the right nor the left, and thus live the life of faith. This is touching the hem of the garment of Jesus. When we conscientiously obey the words of Jesus we touch the hem of his garment, and his virtue goes forth to heal us of all our sickness, of all our sins, and all our imperfections. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." This is true homage to our Lord, and consists not in saying, Lord, Lord, but in doing the will of the Father in Heaven.

Particularly is this true when the soul is afflicted by a grievous and long standing sickness; when old sins press heavily and the soul does not know how to rid itself of them. Then it is that a great fear and wavering of mind seems to take possession of one. He says to himself: It is of no use to try to get rid of sin. I am so bad I cannot be forgiven. It is impossible for me to make my confession. I have so many sins I cannot recall or confess them. The devil tries to drive him to despair by filling his mind with exaggerated fears. His faith seems to him very feeble and well-nigh gone. What shall be done? Let him say, like the woman of the Gospel, If I do but touch the hem of his garment I shall be healed. And

how shall this be done? Only let him resolve to quit his sins and do better; and then come to confession and do what he can. Only begin; that is, just touch the hem of the Saviour's garment, and rest assured virtue or power will go forth to heal him of all his sins, and to put away all his bad dispositions. With this confidence in God and good will, in a moment, in an instant, our evil will be healed, and we shall be filled with the sensation of being restored once more to God's favor. This is a miracle which happens every day; and it is more wonderful than the cure of the issue of blood or the raising of the dead to life, for it is giving life to the dead soul and planting the seed of immortality in it. Let us, then, try to touch the garment of Jesus, in the holy tribunal of penance, in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, in holy prayers and aspirations to God, and he will recognize us, he will grant us all our wishes, he will become our life, and the source of unbounded happiness for ever in Heaven. Amen.

## CHRIST WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM.

*(Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.)*

And when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes.—*St. Luke xix. 41, 42.*

NEXT Sunday we are going to begin the holy season of Advent. The word Advent signifies "the coming," or approach. The season of Advent, therefore, signifies the time when we prepare for the coming of our Lord. Our Lord came into the world when he was born an infant in the stable of Bethlehem. And the season of Advent is the time to prepare ourselves suitably for that wonderful and joyful event. Now, what is a suitable preparation? It is to have our hearts pure and free from sin. It is to enter into ourselves by reflection and thought, so as to be sorry and to regret sincerely our sins and all our ingratitude to God, who has done so much for us, and to make up our minds and determine with the help of God's grace, which is always ready for us, that henceforth we will put away all wickedness and serve God with sincerity. It is to reflect and strengthen in us the conviction of the worthlessness and emptiness of all worldly things, pleasures, honors, and riches, in com-

parison of the love of God, and the things of eternity after this life is over.

In order to do this Holy Church, our mother, the mother of our souls appointed by our Lord to nourish and guide us, directs our attention all through Advent to the second coming of our Lord, when he shall come in great power and majesty to judge all men, the living and the dead. Both the gospel of to-day and of next Sunday are about the general judgment.

The Holy Ghost says the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. When the horse we are driving gets slow and sluggish, he must be aroused by the whip or the spur to make his journey, and so we all who, amid the cares and the business of life, get sluggish and indifferent, must be aroused by a serious consideration of the momentous issues of eternity, by the thought of the things which are quickly and certainly coming on us.

So let us consider the words of our Saviour when he approached Jerusalem: "And when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes."

Jerusalem was a magnificent and beautiful city. Situated on five high hills, it could be seen from a distance. It contained the Temple

of God, and its towers and domes, covered with gold, shone in the sun. Our Lord loved this sacred city; he loved its people, his own countrymen. But when he looked at it he burst into tears. He foresaw its coming destruction: this proud city levelled to the ground, its inhabitants either slaughtered or dragged off into captivity. Because of their sins, because all taken up with their pleasures and their money-getting, they had forgotten to please God and to live virtuous lives, and because they would turn a deaf ear to his teaching, and reject him and even crucify him. He saw how easily they could reconcile themselves to God and obtain true peace of mind, but that they would throw away their opportunity; and this folly caused him to break out into this lamentation.

Jerusalem is a figure of the soul of each one of us. It is the most beautiful thing in the whole creation. It is next to God himself, and capable of an infinite knowledge and happiness. The soul contains God himself. "Ye are the temple of God, and God dwelleth in you." But as Christ wept over Jerusalem, so does Holy Church weep and lament over the souls of many of her children. They do not know the things which are for their peace *in this their day*. What is "this their day"? It is this mortal life; this very short and uncertain life; this life given to us to prepare



ourselves for an immortal life to be shared with the immortal God. We may call it a day, for it is only a day, and less than a day in comparison with eternity. It is as a light cloud passing across the sun.

And what are *the things which appertain to their peace?* That we are created by God in his own image and likeness; to love and serve God in this world in order to be happy with him in the next. That if we obey him and do his will we shall reach our final destiny; but if we are disobedient and live for this world, and make ourselves our own God and despise the God who created us, we shall be for ever banished from his presence, to spend our eternity in everlasting regret. If we live according to these things we shall have peace, all the peace we are capable of here; a peace which the world cannot afford, and everlasting peace when this world is over.

But, alas! these things are hid from the eyes of a great many. Why? Because they wilfully shut their eyes so that they may not see them. If they open their eyes to see them, then they would have to quit their guilty pleasures and their ill-gotten gains. That they are determined not to do, and it makes them unhappy to think that the time is coming when they must render an account; and to escape this unhappiness they put the thought away as

quickly as they can. In this way they get a false peace—the peace of death; the same kind of peace a man would have who would drug himself to sleep when his house is on fire, instead of waking up and escaping.

Besides, they cannot think on God and eternity, because they are so occupied and taken up with the present life; they keep up such an incessant thinking about one trifle after another, that there is no room for a serious thought. A serious impression with them is like a foot-print on the sand of the sea-shore: the wave comes a moment after and washes it all out. Religion is their real business in life; but they have no time to attend to it. They can attend to everything else; they can find time enough for pleasures, for reading all sorts of things, for idle conversations, for gain, for idleness, but no time for religion. If God speaks to them by the events of life—by sending them sickness or the fear of death; by the sudden death of their companions, or their children, or their brothers and sisters, they stop an instant in a kind of terror, and then drive off the impression as soon as they can. They grow harder and harder, until finally nothing whatever seems to make any impression. Their day goes by, and they have not known the things that are for their peace.

Our Lord wept over Jerusalem because he

foresaw the destruction shortly to befall it. He said: "For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." All this was accomplished within thirty years. The Romans came and utterly destroyed it, slaughtering the most part of the inhabitants, destroying the Temple, and leading what people remained away into captivity.

So it will be with the soul at the hour of death. Its enemies shall surround it on every side. If one has his senses, he will see death approaching him with a horrible dread. He must cut loose from everything he has been so much attached to. This will be exceedingly bitter. His soul has fixed itself on these things, and cannot fix itself on anything else. He knows he is entirely unprepared for eternity, and he is afraid to meet God. This idea frightens him so that he cannot bear to think of it; he shuts it out. All the sins of his past life come up before him. He is unaccustomed to pray; he has not loved God; he has hated and despised him, and he does not feel now any different from what he always has. He is beaten flat to the ground; he

is in a state of despair. He cannot collect his thoughts ; they go whirling around his brain. In this condition he passes away to meet his God. Still even here there is a chance for repentance, though a small one, because he has his senses and can repent.

But how many are taken down by a sudden attack, and pass away, being in a state of insensibility from almost the beginning of their illness until their death. This is worse. They are beaten flat to the ground, and their children within—*i.e.*, their thoughts and their acts—until suddenly they appear before God utterly unprepared, to bewail their folly for all eternity.

We should thank God that the time of our visitation is not over. When God visits our souls we can still hear him and obey his voice. He has visited us often. He visits us when we are in the church and listen to the Gospel, as we have to-day when he told us of the last judgment. He visits us when some great calamity befalls us, and tells us then that if we trust in human things we are leaning on a broken reed ; that nothing whatever of all this will remain, but that it will utterly disappear. And he often visits us in the very bottom of our hearts. As soon as we stop to reflect, and shut out our distracting thoughts, God begins to speak to us, to warn us and threaten us if we

are in sin, to urge us to be reconciled, to console us and encourage us to persevere if we are in grace. Let us prepare ourselves in this season of Advent, that when Christmas comes round we may have reflected on our condition, regretted our sins sincerely, confessed them humbly; determined to live like good Christians and children of our heavenly Father, received Holy Communion, and be able to rejoice that Christ is born into the world, to be our Redeemer, our example, and our joy for all eternity. Amen.

## Sermons for Festivals.

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### PATRONAGE OF ST. JOSEPH.

*(Third Sunday after Easter.)*

And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them.—*St. Luke ii. 51.*

HOLY Church calls on us to-day to celebrate a special festival in honor of St. Joseph.

We have had for a long time this festival, which is celebrated on the 19th of March; but the Church is not satisfied with this. God inspired some of the saints, particularly St. Teresa, with a particular devotion to St. Joseph, the Foster-Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. She, by her spiritual writings, excited general attention to the great share of this saint in the work of the Incarnation, reminded us of his power with his Foster-Son, our Lord, and of the benefits to be gained by reflecting on his life and by his intercession. So the Church has proclaimed St. Joseph the Patron of the Universal Church, and instituted this special festival for the third Sunday after Easter.

The dignity of St. Joseph follows immediately from his relation to the stupendous mys-

tery of the Incarnation. The eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, who was from eternity without beginning as well as without end, came down upon the earth, took our human nature and united it to his Divine nature in his own Person of the Divine Word, and became in all respects like one of us, except sin ; so that, not ceasing to be God, he became man, and is rightly called the God-man. To accomplish this, he took his flesh and human nature from a pure and unspotted Virgin, the Blessed Virgin Mary. He had no human father, but was conceived by the Holy Ghost—that is, by Divine Power—in the womb of the Virgin. She thus stands nearest to the Divinity. She is the true Mother of God, who derived his human nature entirely from her. As he remains man in heaven for all eternity, she remains mother for all eternity, with a mother's dignity and power in heaven. But as Christ, becoming man, would fully take his share in all human circumstances, without allowing his Divinity to shield him from what is painful and trying, he was born an infant like another, and lived and grew up like another ; only like a poor man, not one in easy circumstances. He would be dependent, like any one else, on the care of his fellow-men ; so it was necessary that he and his Blessed Mother should have a protector to take care of them

and provide for them by his labor ; and this protector was St. Joseph. So we see St. Joseph occupies a place next to the Blessed Virgin. As God the Father is the head of the family in Heaven—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—so St. Joseph represents the Eternal Father on the earth, taking charge of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Blessed Mother. Great must have been his sanctity to be selected for this office. He is described simply as a just man ; and this is enough, for this signifies that he understood his position as to God, rendering to him his due ; all worship and obedience, and leading a perfect life.

He was led by Divine Providence into this sublime office of Protector, for he was espoused to the Blessed Virgin. No doubt there was an understanding between them to live in celibacy, devoted singly to prayer and good works, as appears by the answer made by the Blessed Virgin to the Archangel announcing to her that she was to be the Mother of the Messiah, the Divine Word : “ How can this be, since I know not man ? ”—that is, I am devoted entirely to God, and must remain always a virgin.

St. Joseph afterwards perceiving that she was with child, not knowing the mystery, was troubled. She did not explain to him, leaving it to God to care for her. And God sent his



angel to make it known to St. Joseph in a vision. St. Joseph accepted his mission with joy and thankfulness, and became the Foster-Father of our Lord. He cheerfully bore all the burden of this office, and it was not a small one.

Mary and Joseph were living peacefully at Nazareth when suddenly came an order from the Roman emperor for an enrollment of the people. This made a long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem necessary in the winter, in the inclement season of the year. The time of the birth of the Divine Child would come before they could return. We may imagine the trouble and anxiety this would cause them. They came to Bethlehem, but so many others came for the same reason that there was no place for them at the inn. Every one turned a deaf ear to Joseph's entreaties for a shelter. And night coming on, they had to go into a cave, or cattle-shed. What did not St. Joseph suffer seeing the distress of the Blessed Virgin? There our Saviour was born, and there they adored him.

Then, returning to Nazareth, they were informed by an angel that they should go down to Egypt and live there an indefinite time. What a trial of St. Joseph to leave his country and go into a strange land, not knowing any one, and work with his hands to get a poor

living for his family ! We know that he accepted this without a murmur, and devoted himself gladly to this service.

At the death of Herod he was warned again to return to Judea, and lived again at Nazareth. We hear no more of him until Jesus reached his twelfth year, when going up to Jerusalem he absented himself from his mother and St. Joseph, and was found by them, after a three days' search, among the doctors of the law in the Temple. Here again we can picture to ourselves the deep grief which possessed their hearts, not knowing the Divine designs in the matter. St. Joseph does not say a word, penetrated as he was with a sense of the Divinity of our Lord, while the Blessed Virgin could not refrain from expressing her pent-up grief, saying: "Son, why hast thou done so: thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Our Lord replied: "Didst thou not know that I must be about the things of my Father?" And he went down with them, and was obedient to them. From that time until he commenced his public ministry he remained in obscurity and quietness, no doubt working with St. Joseph in the carpenter's shop, calling him father and honoring and obeying him as such.

For many years St. Joseph was daily in the company of the Son of God, privileged to converse with him and to serve him. No other

man on the earth was so intimately connected with our Lord, and this connection once formed, remains substantially the same in heaven. The Son of God will pay him always the respect and affection which a son owes to a father, for great must have been the love of Jesus for St. Joseph. He is rightly the Patron of the Universal Church. We all owe him our love and veneration for the care and love he bestowed on our Lord.

St. Joseph is the patron of our temporal affairs; and when we are in difficulties in regard to them we can invoke his help, which he will give us so far as it does not interfere with the more important affair of our salvation.

Joseph, the son of Jacob, the patriarch of the old Testament, is taken by the Church to be the type and representative of St. Joseph in the New Testament. He represents him in his chastity, which brought him into such great troubles; in his familiar intercourse with God in dreams and prophecy; in his love and care for his family, and in his promotion to be the protector of the people, so that all went to him for the means of subsistence in their famine and distress. As Pharaoh said to the people, "Go to Joseph," so the Church tells us to go to our Joseph, St. Joseph, in our temporal and spiritual distresses. And St. Joseph is the patron of the interior and spiritual life. He

lived in retirement and silence. He did not trouble himself with worldly affairs, but lived in the thought of God. He chose the best part, to sit at the feet of Jesus, as Mary did, and be instructed and guided all the time by the Spirit of God. This was the sanctity of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Joseph, the highest possible on this earth. Humble, simple, unaffected in outward appearance, his soul was continually filled with the most sublime and lofty thoughts and desires. His example shows us that God looks at the heart and the good intention, and not at splendid outward works. "The beauty of the king's daughter is within," says the Scripture. We can, then, meditate on the example of St. Joseph, and invoke his aid with great confidence.

The road of life travelled by St. Joseph was a plain one. It was the faithful performance of his daily duty as it came along, and, if we would please God, we must travel that same road. We need, then, to arm ourselves only with this good intention; keep it lively and active by our prayers; live by faith, making all our actions accord with the teachings of the faith, letting God have his own way with us, and taking from his hand with thankfulness whatever he sends us. Imitate the Holy Family at Nazareth, and we shall see them at last in our eternal home in heaven.

## FESTIVAL OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE.

*(Thirtieth of June.)*

Go thy way ; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.—*Acts ix. 15, 16.*

ON the 29th of June we celebrated the festival of the great Apostles Sts. Peter and Paul. These two Apostles are associated together by the Church, inasmuch as it was in a great degree through their efforts that our holy religion was established at its outset in the world. St. Peter was appointed by our Lord to be the foundation on which the Church was to be built, according to the words of Christ: "Thou art Peter"—that is, a Rock—"and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her." He was appointed to be the shepherd and pastor of the flock in the commission, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs"—and his successor sits to-day in his chair, after the lapse of some 1900 years, in the person of our Holy Father Leo XIII.

And St. Paul was appointed by special revelation to be his coadjutor and helper, in the words of the text: "For he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." St.

Peter, after preaching the gospel in various places, mostly among the Jews, found his way to Rome and established his see, and there was martyred. And likewise St. Paul, after preaching the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles—though mostly to the latter—found also his way to Rome, where he preached some years, and, along with St. Peter, put our holy religion on a firm footing. They are, then, joint founders of the Church, and associated by the Church in one commemoration, the great festival of Sts. Peter and Paul.

But immediately after is also a special commemoration of St. Paul, called the great Apostle of the Gentiles, whom we honor not only on account of his great dignity, but also because he is our especial patron, the church being named, after him, the Church of St. Paul the Apostle.

St. Paul was a glorious specimen of what a Christian ought to be. He was always in earnest. He wanted to be faithful to his religion and to God, and he realized that this was of far more importance than anything else. We see this even when he was in darkness as to the truth. His intention was right, though his action was wrong; and God looks at the intention, not at the performance. He was brought up in the tradition of the Jews, a strict Pharisee. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel,

a celebrated Jewish doctor of the law, and he was zealous to have this law carried out. Therefore he persecuted the Christians. He even held the clothes of those who were stoning St. Stephen, the first martyr.

But our Lord saw in him the qualities fitted to make him his greatest apostle, after St. Peter—greater than St. Peter in some respects, though less in authority. Therefore, as he was on his journey towards Jerusalem, filled with the idea of persecuting, and even killing, those he thought enemies of God, he was suddenly struck down on the road as by a stroke of lightning and made blind. A voice spoke to him, reproving him. He said, "Who art thou, Lord?"—and the answer was, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." And he said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." What a beautiful expression! As soon as he saw the truth he yielded to it his full consent. He made no conditions. All he wanted was to carry out the will of God completely, and to be faithful to all God's commands from that day forward until the end of his life.

And this, my dear brethren, should be our disposition. When God has been good enough to speak to our hearts, and show us our errors and put us in the way of salvation, we should exclaim with all our hearts, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." And that should be

our cry and our prayer every day as long as we live. If we would only bear this in mind, our salvation would be secure and our lives would be a heaven on earth.

And now St. Paul starts out on his career as a preacher of the gospel of Christ with wonderful success; for God gave power to his words and confirmed them by great miracles. After preaching thus awhile he retired into Arabia to spend some time in prayer and communion with God. He speaks of this in his epistle to the Galatians. There he gathered strength for future labor; there, no doubt, he received heavenly instructions which he was to impart to us in the many epistles of the New Testament.

Coming out of this retreat, he went up especially to confer with St. Peter at Jerusalem. That was fitting and suitable. Though directly instructed by the Holy Ghost, and not needing it, he would show us an example of respect to him who was constituted by Divine authority the Head of the Church, and obtain his sanction for his ministry. This is pleasing to God, who wishes that all things should be done in the order he has established.

Then he entered on a career of unparalleled activity. It is wonderful how he could do so much: preaching incessantly, instructing the converts he made until they were thoroughly



grounded in the faith; going from one city to another, to nearly all the principal cities of the Roman Empire; remaining a longer or shorter time in each, and then beginning the work in another. These journeys were long and difficult. The means of travelling were poor. They were made on foot, or in wagons, or in sail vessels on the Mediterranean. He established Christian communities everywhere; and he kept them in his mind and directed them when absent, as we see by the epistles he wrote to them. He was indeed the chosen vessel to carry the name of Christ to the Gentiles, to kings, and the children of Israel, according to the words of our Lord.

St. Paul did this for the people of his own day by word of mouth, and by his epistles to his converts in different cities; and by these same epistles, or letters, to us and to all Christians to the end of the world; for these letters contain the most necessary and sublime doctrine, teaching us our relations with God and our fellow-men, and particular instructions as to the duties of the different states of life, giving us also great joy and courage to perform them. They ought to be read over and over again, and we shall find in them indeed the food of perfection and eternal life in a shape that we can easily digest it, and be brought to great spiritual strength and vigor.

But all this activity and zeal of St. Paul was at the expense of great suffering ; as our Lord said : “ I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”

Wherever he proclaimed the gospel he found opposition. He made many converts among his countrymen the Jews ; but generally a large number of them became at once his bitter enemies, and would take his life if they could ; they reviled him, subjected him to every indignity, assaulted him with mob violence, as a wicked renegade from their old traditions. And the Gentiles also did the same sometimes when he interfered, as at Ephesus, as they thought, with their worldly prospects. Those hardened in sin hated him because he made them feel uncomfortable in their vices. St. Paul himself sums up shortly his sufferings, going beyond all limit : “ Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes, save one.” Think of this—to be publicly beaten like the common thief ; a punishment we do not inflict on the very vilest of criminals. “ Thrice I was beaten with rods ; once I was stoned.” He was on that occasion made unconscious and supposed to be dead. “ Thrice I suffered shipwreck ; a day and a night I have been in the deep.” Read the graphic account of the shipwreck of the vessel he was on, when she was cast away on the Island of Malta—when the

crew and prisoners, of whom Paul was one, had to get ashore by swimming or on boards and planks : " In journeyings often in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." He carried his life in his hands ; on one occasion they conspired and swore that they would not eat or drink until they had killed him. He was put in irons, and kept so a long time. This is enough ; we cannot enumerate all his sufferings. In this respect he was a faithful follower of his Master our Lord Jesus Christ, taking with patience all that befell him by the Divine ordinance. No wonder, then, that at the close of his life he exclaims with great joy : " I have kept the faith, I have finished my course ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory which the Lord will give me : and not only to me, but to all those who love his appearing."

What should we learn from the example of this great apostle and martyr ? Two things, it seems to me : first, to appreciate the great gift of the faith, which we have received as well as he, and to be zealous to promote it among our fellow-men. It is a greater gift than to possess the whole world ; for this world and all in it shall pass away and be gone, but this faith,

lived up to, shall make us possess an immortal inheritance in heaven. It is a debt of gratitude we owe to God to advance his kingdom here on the earth by doing what we can. We perhaps cannot preach as St. Paul did ; but we can set a good example, we can live according to the spirit and true meaning of our religion, and that will do much. Example is more powerful than words. A good Catholic who follows the example of Christ will not go empty-handed into heaven. He will convert those outside the Church to the faith ; he will convert bad Catholics to a better life. The spread of the faith depends upon the laity as much as on the clergy—perhaps more so as things are, and each one has his own responsibility and should be alive to it.

And, secondly, we should learn from St. Paul's example to confide in God and accept from him whatever he sends us ; saying, with St. Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do." This submission and satisfaction with the Divine will should extend to everything without exception ; to our external circumstances—sickness or health, riches or poverty, esteem or contempt, life or death ; to our internal and spiritual course, letting God lead us as he will—in dryness and desolation, in interior conflict, in temptations of various kinds, in apparent abandonment, as it was with our Saviour when

he hung on the cross crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou abandoned me." God never abandons one under such circumstances. He leaves us the consciousness that he does not, but may, in some sense, seem to. Let him have his own way. It is for us not to oppose him in whatever, in his infinite wisdom and goodness, he sees fit to send us. In this way we shall come safely through. Let us, then, invoke the intercession of St. Paul and follow after him, and we shall one day see him in Heaven, and thank him for all the good he has procured for us. Amen.

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### MARY CHOSE THE BEST PART.

*(Sunday in Octave of the Assumption.)*

And the Lord answering, said to her : Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.—*St. Luke x. 41, 42.*

WE celebrate to-day one of the greatest and most joyful festivals of the whole year—the assumption into heaven of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We congratulate our Mother, the dearest and best of mothers, on the end of her long trial and weary journey on this earth, and her entrance into the reward of her faithfulness and patience. And the Church has selected for the gospel to be read on this day the account of

Martha and Mary, and of our Lord's especial commendation of Mary that she had chosen the best part, which should not be taken away from her.

The reason for this is that our Blessed Lady was the one of all mortal beings who, above the rest, and pre-eminently, chose the best part—which she enjoys now and will enjoy for all eternity. She above all others did not trouble herself about trifles, and pass her life in a fret and anxiety, but fixed her mind entirely upon God, and in God remained in perfect peace and tranquillity amid all the changes and trials of this life. Let us look a little into this life of the Blessed Virgin, that we may learn by it how to regulate our own.

The first mention of the Blessed Virgin in the Gospels is in that of St. Luke, when the Archangel Gabriel stood before her, and announced that she was to be the Mother of the Messias. His words were few, but they included a great deal of meaning. "Hail, Mary, full of grace," he said. "Blessed art thou among women." The Blessed Virgin was very young at the time, according to tradition—though the Gospel does not say anything about it—not more than fifteen; yet she was full of grace. What does that mean? It implies that she was possessed of a spirit of wisdom which controlled all her actions. She recognized the power and the wisdom and the goodness of her Creator, and

gave to him her whole heart. She recognized early in life the great truth of the text, "One thing only is necessary"; and as long as this "one thing" was secure, she gave herself no uneasiness about the success of anything else. She, no doubt, had her disappointments, and that crossing of the inclinations which we meet with; but looking at these things all in the clear light of God's will, she was instantly and completely reconciled to them. Now, let us stop a little and consider the meaning of this. Although these dispositions of the soul are the operation of the Divine grace, they are also the judgments of our best and highest reason. Our own right reason tells us unmistakably the perfect wisdom and goodness of our Creator; and it tells us also just as clearly our obligation to conform ourselves exactly to his will. Our reason tells us that just as the magnetic needle points to the North Pole, no matter how you may turn it, so our wills ought at all times and under all circumstances to point exactly to the will and pleasure of our Maker; and if they get turned aside from it, that they should never rest until they come back again to it. This being the law of our reason, impressed upon it by the Almighty himself, it follows that if we do not act up to it and make God and his will supreme, but rather

give our best attention to anything else, we must be "careful and troubled." Our best reason urges us one way, and our passions and lower inclinations another; and we are in a conflict; we are dissatisfied with ourselves. We say within ourselves, My course can only bring ruin and misfortune along with it; I do not obey God, and I know that by obeying him alone I can attain to true happiness. This we can see every day all around us. A man has plenty of riches, and all that wealth can bring him, but he does not acknowledge God. Is he happy? No; his existence lacks its central point. He lives for nothing; for all he lives for is nothing in comparison. His heart is gnawed by an emptiness and a craving which is never satisfied, and he has an apprehension of an eternal gnawing and craving which shall never be satisfied. The Blessed Virgin Mary understood all this from the first dawning of her intelligence, and she acted up to this dictate of her reason perfectly. Would that young people would lay her example to heart. They can do it, I think, with more ease than older people. Why? Because the candor and freshness of youth is more favorable to receive and hold these great truths. A child, or a young man or woman, is more capable of being impressed by the idea of the greatness and wisdom of God than one who is immersed in cares and business,



and who has become more selfish and filled with self. Yes, the young are capable and fitted to follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to do as she did: consecrate their best thoughts and actions and energies to his service, and regard other things as of comparatively no importance.

There are many men and women before me now, and I say to you, Why do you not take it for your fixed and settled principle, that you will obey God in all times, in all places, and under all circumstances? Why do you not resolve and keep on resolving every day, in your prayers, that you will never do anything dishonest, or unchaste, or disrespectful to God and his religion; but deny yourselves and make your little sacrifices, that you may become better and more pleasing to God every day of your lives. You would soon lay a sure and strong foundation of a truly noble and contented and useful life; and having chosen the best part, it should never more be taken away from you. It is a pity indeed to see young men and young women throwing away their lives, their talents, their opportunities in a host of useless trifles, in mere vanity and dissipation, until they become hateful to everybody and disgusting to themselves, when they could have been admired and beloved by all who knew them, and a source of blessing to all who came within

the sphere of their actions. When St. Francis Xavier was a young man he was handsome, accomplished, and devoted to the world. Religion was repugnant to him; he did not wish to hear of it. But there was a nobility in his soul which would not let him rest satisfied. St. Ignatius saw it; he sought his acquaintance. St. Francis tried to avoid him, but St. Ignatius took occasion to meet him as often as he could. He praised him, and, so to speak, flattered him, his talents, his eloquence; and he always dropped this sentiment: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

These words made little impression at first; but, like the water dropping on a stone, they did their work after awhile. St. Francis could not help saying to himself: That is only too true; I am wasting my time; I am losing the only thing worth gaining. He gave himself up heart and soul to the idea; and we all know what wonders of divine grace were accomplished afterwards by his means.

Why do we not have more St. Francis Xaviers—more missionaries filled with an apostolic spirit to convert the world? Because as our young people grow up they are taught, and believe, that so many things are needful. It is not the Almighty God that they need, but the almighty dollar! It is not stern, inflexible

principle, which makes a man godlike, but soft raiment and luxurious eating and drinking, which is sought for.

The Blessed Virgin Mary chose the better part, and most faithful was she to it. She was never careful and troubled about anything. Her calmness and unruffled reliance shines out of the Scripture like a beautiful sheet of clear water on a mild autumn day. When St. Simeon predicted that a sword should pierce her own heart, it is simply stated that she laid up this saying and pondered over it—as it was right and proper she should. When she lost Jesus she sought him diligently for three days; and when she found him, she said: “Son, why hast thou done so to us? Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.” He replied: “Did you not know that I must be about the things of my Father?” That was enough. She bowed her head at that word in perfect satisfaction. And when our Lord said to her, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? My hour is not yet come,” this most perfect woman was not troubled. She saw the blessed will of God in what seemed a rebuke and a humiliation, and accepted it, saying, “Do whatsoever he shall command you.” And our Lord rewarded her confidence by performing the thing she asked and which he had seemed to refuse. So we may follow Mary all through her life,

and we cannot find anything but the most perfect and most complete choice of God—the most perfect appreciation of the eternal and divine truths.

And God treated her with a full share of trials and of sufferings, which she bore without flinching. She stood under the cross and the sword pierced her heart. Jesus died and entered into his glory. One would have thought she should have finished her course at the same time. But no; fifteen long years she waited patiently and serenely. It was God's will to show us this great example of his Mother to stop our too ready complaints. She endured her bereavement and exile fifteen years before the summons came to depart. What is fifteen years, after all, compared with eternity? She went to join her Divine Son, to be installed as the Mother of the King, at his right hand, and to be our advocate in Heaven.

O Mary! who so perfectly chose the best part, which thou shalt enjoy for ever, pray for us poor sinners, that we may no longer be cheated by deceitful, perishable things, which only make trouble and anxiety, but may we with our whole hearts choose the best part, which shall not be taken from us, and finally be united to thee, the best and sweetest of Mothers, and to thy Divine Son, our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, for all eternity. Amen.

**FESTIVAL OF THE SEVEN DOLORS.**

And Simeon blessed them; and said to Mary his mother: Behold, this child is set for the ruin, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted: and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed.—*St. Luke ii. 34, 35.*

THIS prediction of the Blessed Simeon was fulfilled when Our Lady stood under the cross at the Crucifixion of her Divine Son. For never did a mother love her son as the Blessed Virgin loved our Lord Jesus Christ. For he was the most beautiful and the most amiable of all the sons of men; and she was the one chosen among all women to be his mother, adorned with every grace, spotless, and fitted in every way to be the mother of the Word made Flesh. It is impossible to form any idea of the deep, intense love of this Mother and Son. The most perfect human affection which ever existed between parents and children is as nothing in comparison to it. Is it any wonder, then, that Simeon should describe the suffering of Our Lady by saying that "a sword shall pierce thy own heart also"? As she stood under the cross and saw His hands and feet nailed to the cross, and that intense agony which allowed him no rest for a single instant, she felt most acutely all the pains he suffered. As she shared in his coming into the world by

giving her consent to the message of an angel, so she shared in his redemption by suffering in spirit all that he suffered in body when he was crucified and died for us.

As St. Bernard said: "Was it not more than a sword piercing her heart, and dividing the soul from the body, when she heard the words, 'Woman, behold thy son'? Oh, what a change! John is given to thee instead of Jesus,—the servant for the Lord, the disciple for the master, the son of Zebedee for the Son of God—a mere man for the true God."

The Church rightly appoints a feast to commemorate the sufferings of Our Lady, for in compassionating her sufferings we learn to love God, our Lord Jesus Christ, better, and to appreciate more his human sympathy and love to us. As our Saviour came into this world to be an example to us as well as to redeem us, his was a life of hardship and suffering from the beginning until the end. 'And Our Lady shared in it all.

He who knew all things had before his mind constantly the ignominious death, with its cruel suffering, that awaited him. She knew that her Son was the Redeemer and the Messiah, and that he must suffer, and be a contradiction to many. She had the same apprehension that he had. All her life long she carried this around in her heart.

What a strange thing was the birth of her Son at Bethlehem! The King of kings and Lord of lords born in a stable, because there was no room for him in the inn! She must suffer all the inconveniences of the poorest of the poor. She must see her Son suffer in his infancy, for the same reason, the greatest hardships. All his life long for thirty years they must live in the poorest, simplest way, supported by bodily labor.

The first particular sorrow was at the circumcision, when our Saviour shed his blood for us in order to show his perfect obedience and fulfil exactly all the requirements of the law. His infant cries and tears went directly to her heart.

Then came the flight into Egypt, when the angel admonished Joseph in a dream that Herod was seeking the life of the Infant Messiah. They must leave at once home and friends, and all they had, and go out to a distant land. What trouble and distress at such news!—to be all broken up and compelled to undertake a long and painful journey, mostly on foot, exposed to the heat of the day and the chill cold of the night; to settle down among strangers; to be obliged to endure the rigors of extreme poverty until Joseph could get acquainted and make his way. And then to return after so long an absence; to hear of the

massacre of all the children around Bethlehem in order to compass the death of her Son!

And now Our Lady, after returning to Nazareth, enjoys a short tranquillity until Jesus reaches the age of twelve, when they go up to Jerusalem, as they did every year, to celebrate the Passover. When they had fulfilled their duty they returned. But at the close of the day Jesus was missing. They supposed all day that he was with friends and relations; now he is missing. They take alarm and go back to Jerusalem in search of him. For three long days they search everywhere, but he is not to be found. Imagine the grief which must have filled Our Lady's heart! She may have thought, I am unfit to be his mother. It is all right that he should leave me; but what a misery if I should never see him again! She inquired everywhere, for three days. She gave herself no rest; sleep did not come to her eyes. Have you seen my son? If you saw him once, you would never forget him. After three days they find him in the Temple. The mother's heart spoke when she said: "Son, why hast thou done so to us; behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said: How is it that ye sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my father's business." This was one of the seven sorrows of Our Lady.



Another was when our Saviour made his journey carrying his cross to Mount Calvary. She must have made the same journey. One of the Stations is where Jesus meets his Blessed Mother. In deepest grief and deepest resignation she made this journey, offering her own suffering and his to God for our salvation.

Then St. John lifts the veil, and we see Our Lady where we should expect her to be—standing at the foot of the cross, sharing in all his agony until his death.

After this, what grief came over her as she stood by and saw his lifeless body taken down from the cross,—all his sufferings that he had endured coming like a flood upon her as she looked upon him!

And at last the renewal of her grief when he was consigned to the tomb, and she went back to her desolate home to live a long life of bereavement, compelled to live without Him who was the only joy of her soul.

Why had Our Lady to endure all this sorrow?—she who was so innocent, free from the least taint of sin; whose heart was completely filled with love of God and love to us? It was for our consolation, and as an example for us.

It is the lot of the human race to suffer. We are here on trial; our life is a mixture of joy and sorrow. We are here to show our-

selves faithful to God and to his commandments. We must love God above all ; honor and obey him under all circumstances ; in sickness as well as in health, in poverty as well as in abundance ; when death takes away those near and dear to us, as well as when they are around us. When God permits others to afflict us by their misconduct, we must not murmur, but submit. In short, we must take from the hands of God whatever he chooses to send us and never murmur or complain—*i.e.*, wilfully, for a complaint or murmur which proceeds from our weakness without deliberation God most readily forgives. As Scripture says : “ Son, take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure. And in thy humiliation keep patience, for gold and silver are tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.”

This is why our Divine Saviour suffered all his life long, to offer to God in full measure what God requires of us, and in no respect to come behind. And this is why Our Lady had to suffer, to enable our Lord through her to suffer in his deepest affection, seeing her suffer ; to offer the most acceptable sacrifice of patience to God, and to give us an example.

What Christian can think of her sorrows without deriving strength to bear his own ? We can realize the compassion of the Blessed Vir-

gin when we think that she knew what it was to be afflicted, and can sympathize with us.

Let us often reflect on the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin. It will excite us to love her, and to invoke her aid. She will procure us patience and strength to bear ; and this heavenly patience will bring us to complete love of God, and to our home in heaven ; “ for patience hath a perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, deficient in nothing.” Amen.

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## MEANING OF THE ROSARY.

*(Rosary Sunday.)*

Fear not, Mary ; for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son ; and thou shalt call his name Jesus.—*St. Luke i. 30, 31.*

WHEN our first father, Adam, fell from grace, we lost our supernatural destiny, for which we had been created. And this fall of Adam was occasioned by Eve, our first mother. The serpent beguiled her and persuaded her to eat of the forbidden fruit, and she brought about the ruin of the human race. But God in his goodness would not permit this fall to be final and without remedy. He provided a redemption by which we should be reinstated in our former rights and privileges. He said to the serpent : “ I will put enmities between thee and

the woman, and thy seed and her seed. She shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel."

Here we have the first prophecy of the redemption: a woman shall crush the head of the serpent. This woman is the Blessed Virgin Mary. She crushes the head of the serpent by becoming the Mother of Christ. Christ redeems us from the power of Satan by assuming our nature, and this human nature which he assumes he takes entirely and completely from the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This is a wonderful mystery. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God the Son—equal with the Father; eternal—that is, having no beginning and no end; infinite in power and wisdom and goodness; the Creator of the universe—determines, out of love for us, to take our human nature and unite it to his Divine nature in his one person of the Divine Word, and become man—so that this man shall also be God, with the power and wisdom and goodness of God: as we say, the God-Man. To do this he chose a spotless Virgin; and by Divine power, without human intervention, was conceived in her womb; as the Creed says, "was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and was born of the Virgin Mary"—a little infant like any other infant. And this human nature thus taken up will never be laid down again, but

will continue for all eternity; as the angel said to the disciples at the Ascension: "This same Jesus whom ye have seen ascending into heaven, shall come again in the heavens, as you have seen him go, to judge the world."

Now we have an idea of the dignity and glory of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is, in one word, "the Mother of God." Christ did not assume human nature in appearance, but in reality. He took it with all that belongs to it, and will keep it for all eternity. She will be then his Mother, not in appearance but in reality; and she will have all the dignity and power of a mother, not for a time but for all eternity.

Christ, addressing the Apostles, said: "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth." As a mother shares the dignity and power of a son, we may judge of the influence and power of the Blessed Virgin Mary. No mother ever loved a son as the Blessed Virgin loved her Divine Son. No son ever loved a mother as Jesus Christ loved the Blessed Virgin.

The festival we celebrate to-day is that of the Holy Rosary. The Rosary, as you know, is divided into fifteen decades of ten Hail Marys each, with the Lord's Prayer between each decade. In reciting each decade we recall one of the great events of our Redemption—called a mystery because such vast things are signi-

fied by these events that the human mind cannot fully comprehend them.

We repeat in each decade ten times the salutation of the Archangel Gabriel to our Blessed Lady, the most joyful ever brought from heaven to men: "Hail, Mary, full of grace; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." And then add an earnest prayer for Our Lady's intercession: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."

Nothing could be more inspiring and more calculated to give us a lively and vivid idea of the Divine Goodness, and what God has done for us, and make us love him more, than this holy prayer. In it we see the glorious archangel suddenly appearing to our Blessed Lady and addressing her: "Hail, thou who art full of grace"; *i.e.*, receiving all the grace a human creature is capable of, to make her worthy and fit to become the living temple of the eternal and infinite God; and the consequence of this, that she was blessed among all women and associated in blessedness with Jesus Christ, the fruit of her womb.

God was very good to us in giving us his only begotten Son to be our brother, and in giving us the Blessed Virgin Mary to be our mother. You remember when she stood under the cross, our Lord, speaking to her, confided

to her St. John, saying, "Woman, behold thy Son." She was the woman who, crushing the serpent's head, was to be a mother to the whole human race. He did not say, "Mother, behold thy son," merely to commit her to the care of St. John; but, "Woman, behold thy Son"—signifying the office she was to discharge, as mother of the whole human race, for all eternity.

How inspiring and beautiful is the Hail Mary! How full of hope to the downhearted! How full of joy to all men of good will! Let us recite it with enthusiasm, and in sentiments of love and gratitude and wonder at what it tells us. As we repeat it over and over again, we shall never be able to extract from it all the sweetness and profit it contains.

And when we ask the Blessed Virgin to pray for us, what do we ask from her? That we may be confirmed in grace and perseverance until the end. We do not ask for riches, nor for good health, nor a long life, nor honors, nor pleasures, nor any earthly things. All such things are of no consequence compared with the love of God, which will bring us to a final union with God and secure our eternal destiny. If we ask for any of these things, it must be only so far as they are helpful to this great end.

Now, what we ask of the Blessed Virgin

is what is contained in the Lord's Prayer, which we recite between the decades. To honor God's holy name, refrain from all blasphemy, and to be penetrated through and through with the deepest respect and veneration of the Divine Majesty. To wish that his kingdom may come on earth; that both ourselves and all other men may make it our chief care and business of life to do the will of God in all things, small and great; that his will may be done on earth even as it is done in heaven—where we know it is done perfectly and in all things.

This is really the love of God, to do his will as far as we know it. The love of God does not consist in feeling and sentiment, but in the firm determination and will to obey God and to do his will. And if we will to do this to the best of our ability, we are in the true road of perfection, and have the best kind of love of him.

Then we are taught next to ask for our daily bread—the bread of the soul more than that of the body; to depend on God entirely, and not think we can do anything by our own power or exertion, but all things in the strength of his grace, which he is always ready to give us if we ask for it.

We ask for forgiveness of our sins, and are told that the condition of getting it is to for-



give those who have sinned against us; and finally to dread temptation and all occasions of sin.

This is what we ask of the Blessed Virgin when we ask her to pray for us. And if we ask sincerely, and not merely with the lips without meaning what we say, she will, by her powerful influence, procure them for us.

We shall see Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother and enjoy their company, being completely satisfied for all the ages of eternity.

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## THE ROAD TO PARADISE.

*(Festival of All Saints.)*

Now Jesus seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain; and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him. And opening his mouth he taught them, saying: Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.—*St. Matt. v. 1-3.*

WE celebrate to-day the festival of all the Saints. Our Holy Mother the Church calls upon us to consider the glory and joy of all the citizens of the Heavenly Jerusalem, who founded her in their labors, their tears and their blood, to whom we are indebted for the faith, the sacraments, and all our hopes of heaven, since through their faithfulness they have transmitted this sacred legacy to us who now enjoy it. It is a day to us of mingled joy and sorrow,

because when we think of their glory we cannot help thinking of our ignominy. When we think that they are in heaven, we are painfully made aware that we are in the valley of tears and in a place of banishment from our true country. When we think of their joy and triumphant exultation, we think of our pains, our troubles, our miseries and sorrows. But this reflection which our present condition forces upon us is calculated to inspire us with an ardent desire to be where they are, and a firm, unshakable resolution to apply all the means to get there, cost what it may. The Church seems to take the same view when she gives us this gospel of the day: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." She says: You desire to enjoy the happiness of the Saints; well, you must imitate their example and do as they did, and then you will have your wish. Let us see, then, the way the Saints have trod. It is called, in the Book of Wisdom, "a wonderful way,"—"God has rendered to the Saints the reward of their labors, and has led them through a wonderful way." Why is it called a "wonderful way"? Because it is a way which is so strange and different from the ordinary way; a way so different from our natural expectations and desires. Jesus Christ went over this way first of all. He was the pioneer who first

broke the road and made it passable, and now calls on us all to follow. It is the road of poverty and detachment from all the things of this world. This was why he was born in the stable at Bethlehem; why he had not where to lay his head; why he was weary in the way; why he put up with the coarsest fare and the simplest raiment; why at last he walked up the hill of Calvary and was crucified between two thieves. "It behooved the Son of Man to suffer all these things, and thus enter into glory." The road of the world is just the contrary. This is the road of ambition and worldly glory; an incessant strife to get above others and have rule over them, and to be honored and flattered, and to have power, and to carry a high and haughty head. This is the road of riches; to seek an abundance and a superfluity of this world's goods; to fare sumptuously every day and be clothed in purple and fine linen—while the poor are lying neglected and uncared for at the gate; to obtain wealth by dishonest means and by fraud, and dishonest and hard-hearted speculations, which rob the innocent of their hard-earned money. This is the road of pleasure, of idleness and debauchery and drunkenness. It is a broad road, a well-travelled road, full of a crowd of people shouting and dancing and singing, and quarrelling and fighting. "Broad is the road

and wide is the gate which leadeth to destruction, and many there be that walk therein; while strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Now let us see what classes of persons, according to the words of the Divine Saviour, are in the narrow and wonderful road that leads to life. First, the poor in spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Here we must notice that our Lord does not say, "Blessed are the poor"; but "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Because there are two kinds of poverty: one the poverty of necessity, and the other the poverty of choice. Those who are poor by necessity, because they cannot help it, may be very far from being poor in spirit; for they may be greedy and covetous enough after the riches, honors, and pleasures of the world. There is no blessing for such, be they ever so poor. Again, those who choose poverty, if their choice is not for God's sake but for any human or worldly motive, also have no blessing for their poverty. The poor in spirit are those who, whether they possess property or do not possess it, are detached in their souls and freed from the love of money and this world's goods. If they have property and wealth they are very far from considering themselves masters of it, but only

God's stewards, who imposes upon them the heavy responsibility of disposing of it, not for their own pleasure or gratification but for the advancement of his glory. They feel the necessity of constant prayer and watchfulness to keep their souls clear of all luxury and pride and sloth, and, in short, live like the poor in the midst of all their wealth. Of this we have the figure and model in St. Elizabeth, Queen of Thuringia, who wore always haircloth under her royal robes, and amid the richest viands lived more simply and poorly than the peasant.

The poor in spirit who are also poor in fact accept this poverty with thankfulness, rejoice in it, and thank God that they are delivered from a great burden. Poverty of spirit: what is it, in other terms, but the love of God flaming up in the soul and excluding and destroying all love of creatures, except for love of God? As St. Agnes said, to one who sought her in marriage: "Depart from me, thou food of death; for now I am bespoken by another Lover. To Him whose beauty the sun and moon wonder at, to him alone have I plighted my troth"; or, in the words of St. Paul: "For I account all things else as dung in comparison of the excellent knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ." The love of God must be supreme in the soul so far as to exclude every mortal sin, even if we should have to lay down

our lives rather than commit it; otherwise we shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

You see, then, that the poor in spirit, and only the poor in spirit, who have freed their hearts from the dominion of creatures—*i.e.*, of all worldly goods, or honors, or pleasures—who live not as their slaves, but as their masters; who can lay them down, give them up; who think a deal more of God than of any worldly thing, are the ones who shall possess the Kingdom of Heaven. If you are domineered over by riches or other worldly things or objects, so that they overcome you and lead you into sin, it would be better to reduce yourself to a bare subsistence and throw the rest into the ocean, or burn it in the fire, than to continue to own it. And this is why our Lord said to the young man in the gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor, and come follow me"; and when he went away sorrowful, Jesus added: "How hardly shall the rich enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

The man who would be eminent in a profession must be poor in spirit—*i.e.*, he must detach his soul from the love of pleasure, from the love of his ease and comfort, and he must concentrate all his love and all his desire on the study of his profession, or he will not succeed; so we must withdraw ourselves from that

passionate and inordinate love of creatures which besets us, or we shall never acquire the love of God. It is a hard lesson to learn. It is a narrow road to travel. It is a dose of medicine somewhat bitter to the taste, but absolutely necessary to drive out mortal disease from the soul. It is the way of the cross, and we should have always ringing in our ears these words of our Saviour: "Whosoever will be my disciple let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." The Saints travelled this road.

Let us read the description of the great army of Saints:

"The Saints through faith have wrought justice. And others had trial of mockeries and stripes; moreover also of bonds and prisons; they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in want, distressed, afflicted, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts, in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth; . . . and therefore we also, having so great a cloud of witnesses over us, *laying aside* every weight, by patience let us run to the fight proposed to us, looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy proposed to him underwent the cross, despising the shame, and

sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God."

Our life is a warfare, and we must run to the fight set before us ; but let us not imagine that, with all its trials and all its sufferings, such a life is an unhappy one. No ; on the contrary, it is the happiest and best that it is possible to have : because the soul is at liberty and freed from the slavery of sensual desires, and rejoices in the friendship of God. It has all it desires, because it desires nothing but the will of God. The most precious fruits of virtue grow up in it. Now, the fruits of the spirit are these : charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity. But what shall we say of the reward in heaven. Let our Lord himself speak : " Whosoever shall forsake father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands, for my sake, shall have a hundred-fold in this life, and life everlasting."

Let us determine, then, within ourselves to fight this good fight, that we may say with St. Paul, at the close of his career : " I have fought the good fight ; I have kept the faith ; I have finished my course : behold from henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just judge, shall render to me at that day : and not to me only, but to them also who love his coming." Amen.



## WHAT THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION MEANS.

TO-DAY is the festival of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and as we all know, the Catholic Church throughout the world makes a great deal of it, and celebrates it with extraordinary splendor. It was only a few years ago that the greater portion of the bishops of the whole world were assembled together at Rome on purpose to proclaim this doctrine as an article of faith. And the enemies of our holy religion were filled with scorn: "What is the use of making so much parade about a mere abstract doctrine?" "What difference does it make whether the Virgin Mary was immaculate or not?" "All this shows that the Catholic religion is a mere outward show, only occupied about trifles, or a superstition exalting little things at the expense of the worship of the only living and true God."

It will not be useless this evening to see whether this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is trifling or unimportant, and whether it is not one, on the other hand, which should fill us with joy and encouragement in the important work of our salvation.

The most stupendous, astonishing doctrine

of the Christian religion is, without doubt, the Incarnation, because this doctrine teaches us that the Eternal, Almighty God actually became man; that in Jesus Christ the two natures, the Divine and the human, are inseparably united in the one Person of the Eternal Word, or second Person of the Divine Trinity. It is the most astonishing, because there is no comparison between God and man; between the Creator of all things and the creature; between the Almighty and the nothingness called man. But astonishing as it is, it is true; it is the chief corner-stone of our religion, and we proclaim it every day when we bend the knee to the ground and say in the Creed: "Who for us men, and for our salvation, became incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." And again in the Gospel of St. John, read at the close of many Masses, when the words "Et verbum caro factum est—"And the Word was made flesh"—are said we all bow in profound adoration of this deep mystery of love and condescension.

Now, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is one most closely and intimately connected with that of the Incarnation. The Blessed Virgin was selected by God from all eternity, out of all the women of the world, to be the Mother of his Incarnate Son. He was

to take his human flesh and nature entirely from her. Jesus Christ was to be born of a Virgin, without a human father, by the Holy Ghost, the almighty power of God. It was only fitting and right, then, that this Virgin should be in every way prepared and made suitable to be the Mother of God, the Incarnate Word, and that she should be perfectly pure and free from every taint or stain of sin. And accordingly God exempted her, by a special privilege granted to her alone of all the children of Adam, from the stain or blot of original sin. Her soul was created and united to her body, freed from sin and all its consequences, in order that she might be thus prepared and fitted to be the worthy Mother of the pure and spotless Son of God.

The first man, Adam, was constituted in original justice; that is, his nature was made perfect by sanctifying grace, and all his passions were under the dominion of his reason, so that there was harmony and beauty in all his being. By original sin this harmony was disturbed, the passions were no longer under the dominion of reason, but, on the contrary, got the upper hand, and instead of his seeing and adoring God in all creatures, he forgot God and turned himself toward the creature. By original sin he lost all title or fitness for the kingdom of Heaven, he became stained in his

soul and unworthy of the presence of God; so that this original sin is rightly called the death of the soul.

But the Blessed Virgin was that holy one selected to impart human nature to the Son of man. He was to take flesh from her, and so it was unfit that she should be thus stained and polluted. Her nature should be utterly fair and unstained, as in the words of the Canticle: "Behold, my love is all fair and in her is no stain." As Eve, the first woman, was by nature unstained—in original justice—so it was only fitting that Mary, the second Eve, or new head of the race and Mother of Jesus Christ, the second Adam, should be equal in Divine gifts to the first Eve. In this way the prophecy made to Eve at the time of the fall was made good: "And the Lord said to the serpent: Behold, I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head." The Blessed Virgin Mary is that daughter of Eve who has fulfilled the prophecy. Her exemption from the decree of original sin has broken the power of Satan, has brought into the world redemption. The Blessed Virgin and our Lord Jesus Christ—the man Christ Jesus, as he is styled frequently in the Bible—are so intimately associated that they seem to be one, just as we see usually the statue of the Blessed Virgin

holding the Infant Saviour in her arms. Let us beware then, and have a horror of forming any low or unworthy idea of the Blessed Virgin, because such an idea is an unworthy and insulting treatment of her Son. The Angel Gabriel was very far from such conduct; on the contrary he addressed her with the utmost respect and veneration: "Hail, full of grace." What does full of grace mean? It means, not lacking in any grace. But what does original sin mean? It means lacking in grace. Then these things are exactly opposed to each other. The Blessed Virgin could not have ever been in original sin and yet adorned with the fulness of grace. But why make so much of the immaculate purity of the Blessed Virgin? Why? Because we love the honor of our Redeemer. Why? Because we cannot suffer the least blot or stain to fall upon the immaculate, all holy Son of God. His honor, his glory, was not a matter of indifference to his Father, and it should not be so to us. If the condition of the Mother of Jesus Christ is so trifling and unimportant, why, I ask—why did God decree that our Lord should be born of a virgin? Why such a stupendous miracle, and departure from the laws to which all others are subject, in the conception and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ? No, my dear brethren, the Catholic Church is Divine, and is governed by a Divine

Instinct, and knows perfectly well how to guard and insist upon all that relates to the honor and dignity of our Lord, no matter what the children of the world or the wicked may say. Out of the Church what do we see? The Blessed Virgin regarded as no different from any other woman; no honor paid to her, her dignity made light of. We find her forgotten, almost an object of dislike, the very title of Blessed denied her, and she spoken of as the Virgin Mary; even her virginity is denied. And what is the consequence? The doctrine of the Incarnation is forgotten also. If not denied, it is not thought of; it is considered of little importance. In fact, all the force and reality of this holy doctrine, the very cornerstone and life of Christianity, is lost. It becomes the easiest thing in the world to deny the Divinity of Christ, and bring the Christian religion to the level of Deism, Mohammedanism, or what they call nowadays Liberal Christianity.

No, let us always receive the man Christ Jesus out of the arms of the Immaculate Blessed Virgin Mary. Let us with great thankfulness receive this high and glorious doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin as the very bulwark and defence of our most precious and heavenly truth of the Incarnation. Depend upon it, the more we exalt the

dignity of the Blessed Virgin as the very purest and best creature of God, the more shall we appreciate and love the doctrine of the Incarnation, and the nearer shall we be to our own salvation.

For, indeed, the Blessed Virgin is the best example of the pure creature which we can set before our eyes ; an example of both spiritual and bodily purity which will always powerfully raise our souls to God, whenever we consider it.

The Blessed Virgin I call a pure or unmixed creature like ourselves, because our Lord Jesus Christ, although a perfect man, was also God. The Blessed Virgin was immaculate both in soul and body. She was so in soul, for every thought of her heart, every intention, every desire, was directed purely to God. This is spiritual chastity, in which no love of any human or earthly thing is allowed to defile and corrupt the pure love of God. She allowed no trouble or perplexity to disturb the tranquillity of her soul, but seeing the will of God in all, she accepted it and adored the wisdom of God in all, in one thing as well as another. Let us think of this ; let us picture to ourselves this sublime purity of soul of the Immaculate Virgin. It will be a model for us. And let us have recourse to her, praying that we may be like her ; that we may see God in

all things, that we may purify and cleanse all our motives and all our desires, so as to aim only and purely and simply at God in all things, in all places, at all times.

And especially let us pray the Immaculate Virgin for perfect purity of body as well as of soul; raising our hearts at once, immediately, at the very beginning of an unholy temptation or thought, and crying, Mother Immaculate, pray for me; or, Jesus and Mary.

The Blessed Virgin of the Immaculate Conception is represented as treading upon the head of the serpent, with her hands outstretched pouring out a stream of graces upon all the earth. And this is a most true representation. Who has ever had a true recourse to the Holy Virgin and not been heard? Who has ever asked protection against sin sincerely, or increase of Divine grace, and not received it? On this holy Festival of the Patroness of our country, on this crowning glory of the Mother of God, let us renew our fervor, let us stir up in our hearts a great desire, a burning wish to know God better, to love him more, to get farther away from all sin, to get nearer to the Kingdom of Heaven. Recollect in your own hearts the greatest and best things you ever thought of, the greatest gifts, the strongest graces, and go with them to the Mother of God. Say to her, O my Mother! here I am,



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destitute and poor ; get me all these things. Make my heart burn with the pure love of God, get me a firm and steadfast perseverance in good in spite of all obstacles, and bring me at last safe through, into the company of thyself and of thy Son Jesus.

The gracious Mother will hear your prayer and grant your request. She will set you in the right road of salvation now, be a mother to you to keep you from all harm, and give you her Son Jesus Christ to be the delight of your heart amid the miseries of this life. She will come down into your chamber of death, and receive your blessed soul to carry it safe into the realms of eternity.



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